SPIRITUAL ADVENTURING

BERTHA CONDÉ

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Studies in Jesus' Way of Life

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BY

BERTHA CONDÉ

COKESBURY PRESS
NASHVILLE, TENN.
1926

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Printed in the United States of America

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TO

M. I. B.

LONG-TIME FRIEND AND COMRADE

IN SPIRITUAL ADVENTURING

1976

FOREWORD

WE all rejoice in fresh experiences which bring new travel, new ways of making money, new conveniences and comforts; but are dubious about adventuring into new realms of spiritual truth and power. We do not tolerate the limitations and discomforts of our ancestors' mode of living, but are content to stand still where religious growth is concerned. We need to blaze new trails into the secrets of Jesus' way of life if we are to hold our truth-seeking youth who are wondering whether he is still adequate for all human need. The time has come to face the challenging teachings of the living Christ. Every capacity of spirit, mind, and body is needed to make vivid to the world the triumphant personality of the Christ who freed men from sin by his death, and opened untold possibilities for spiritual adventure by his resurrection.

The dimensions of the spiritual life are too limitless to make it possible for anyone to do more than make a few studies of certain aspects of the teaching of Jesus. They are offered in the hope that they will suggest some of the ways of

victorious living, and lead us as Christians to give ourselves wholly to the business of possessing our spiritual inheritance.

The arrangement of the material is such that it can be used either for group discussions or for personal study. For class work it will be better to use the Scripture and the questions for discussion at the beginning of the chapters, for group study. The leader can then draw on the suggestions in the "Comment for the Week" as additional material.

The writer is deeply conscious of the fact that in so vast a realm many most important phases of the subject have had to be omitted. The aim has been to open up some of the more unfamiliar parts of Jesus' way of life in the hope that these brief glimpses may lure us on to greater exploration.

May God lead us all into a new appreciation of his Son, Jesus Christ, our living Lord.

B. C.

New York City,
May 15, 1926.

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"In the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not."

—*From the Gospel according to John.*

SPIRITUAL ADVENTURING

CHAPTER I

OUR REAL SELVES

ONE of the most interesting facts about these present days is that most people have at last discovered the importance of the inner life. Modern psychology has helped to exalt the mind and spirit as indispensable factors in successful living. The teachings of Jesus have always made this plain: but they have been relegated so largely to theological and academic discussions that ordinary people have lived on, unmindful of the great resources within their reach. It is in the real inner self that the sense of the presence and power of God may be felt. We need to test out the reality of that assurance of our Master that the kingdom of God is within us. It will be the greatest adventure of our life if we discover the living Christ manifesting himself to us and energizing us for triumphant living in this complex age.

FIRST WEEK

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was three-score furlongs from Jerusalem.

And they communed with each other of all these things which had happened.

And it came to pass, while they communed and questioned together, that Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

And he said unto them, What communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk? And they stood still, looking sad.

And one of them, named Cleopas, answering said unto him, Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?

And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.

But we hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel. Yea and beside all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass.

Moreover certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb;

And when they found not his body, they came,

saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

And he said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?

And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they were going: and he made as though he would go further.

And they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. And he went in to abide with them.

And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to meat, he took the bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?

—LUKE 24: 13–32.

What a weary walk that must have been for those two friends of Jesus! Their faith in him had suddenly been shaken by the apparent fail-

ure of all their expectations. They had hoped that their friendship with him would settle all questions and give them the life of peace for which they so eagerly longed. Now he had been put to death by the opposing forces, and they were discouraged. Their hearts were full of the disappointment as they toiled along the road back to their home village to begin again the same old round of daily living.

They did not reckon, however, with the spaciousness of the spiritual life. They did not realize that opposition, and even death itself, could not kill the living Christ. He could not be confined by flesh and blood, or even by the life in this world. God possesses all things. Clothed in the garb of a stranger, the immortal spirit of Jesus overtook them and, drawing near, walked with these two friends. He showed a deep sympathy with all their questionings and mental despair. As they walked on, a new experience came to them. Old passages in the Scriptures took on a new meaning under the spell of the teaching of this stranger, and a new kind of light dawned upon their minds.

After the long walk of about seven miles, they drew near their home. Then came a crisis. In verse 28 we read, "They drew nigh unto the

village, whither they were going: and *he made as though he would go further.*" In other words, he began to take leave of them and would have departed, as was natural, at the end of the road. It is breath-taking to consider what would have happened had they let the stranger go away. They might easily have done so. They might have expressed their pleasure over their conversation by the way and turned to their family for rest and refreshment. They must have been tired and hungry after the long walk. It would mean an extra effort to entertain a stranger. If they had let him go on, there would have been nothing but the thrilling memory of a sympathetic soul. But in spite of their fatigue, they rose to their high privilege: they entreated him to stay with them—and he did!

As they all sat down to the evening meal, the stranger was given the chief place, and it was his part to bless the bread and break it. The two hosts had done all they could to prove to their guest that he was first and chief in their thoughts. It was the spot where their attitude of heart reached its highest expression. Then came the revelation. Their eyes were opened and they knew him—the living, risen Lord! Then he vanished from their sight, leaving them forever

sure that Jesus was indeed their Messiah and still alive. After such an experience with the Christ, how could they keep silent? Even though the hour was late and the road long, they had to hurry back to Jerusalem to share the good news with the other friends of Jesus. From that time on, he was the absorbing, irresistible center of their life.

For Study and Discussion

1. *The Human Factor in Spiritual Revelation:*

What conditions must we meet in order to recognize the presence of the living Christ? See Matthew 18: 19, 20. What is the true basis of a deep and lasting friendship? Why is it difficult for people who live only in the outer world of things to understand the human heart? Why have Christmas and Thanksgiving Day and New Year's Day lost so much of their holy significance? How can we keep from losing our real selves? In what ways do we need to change our attitude toward our daily habits in order that we shall not miss the presence of the Master?

2. *The Value of Human Fellowship:*

What effect do our human relationships have upon us? Do they measure up to the standard

set in Philippians 4:8? What is Jesus' definition of the defilement of our real selves? See Mark 7:20–23. Is friendship an end in itself, or on what does its value depend? See Luke 23:12 for the agreement between two who became one through a common opposition to Jesus. How does the friendship of the two disciples on the road differ from that of Pilate and Herod? Why do we keep silent about spiritual realities when mingling with our friends?

O Thou living Christ, who hast said that where Thou art we may be also, manifest Thyself to us, we pray Thee. May we, like Thy disciples of old, so lose ourselves in the thought of Thee, that our daily walks may reveal to us Thy divine truth. Help us to be so hospitable to Thee that Thou mayest be at home within us. Amen.

Comment for the Week

It is strange how many people have merely a nodding acquaintance with their real selves. They go through the routine of daily life, eating, sleeping, playing, working, mingling with others and trying to understand them. They have likes

and dislikes and classify happy or disagreeable experiences according to their sensations. Then one day some experience is encountered which cannot easily be understood, and suddenly they come face to face with themselves. People discover then that they are restless, yearning for something which cannot be defined; hoping to be satisfied by friends, only to be disappointed. Tears, doubtings, and a new kind of loneliness sweep over the spirit and the question comes: "Who am I, and why am I living?"

At this point we reveal our true character. Some of us decide that this depression is due to lack of exercise, so out we go for a joy ride. Others go where they may find distraction in the cheerful "gibble-gabble" of neighbors and friends, or in the absorbing drama of a motion picture—anything to forget those troublesome inner selves! The enviable people, however, are those who decide to face the facts squarely, to understand themselves, and to know the real meaning of life.

As we look at ourselves, we discover that we were meant to live an inner and outer life at the same time. If we devote ourselves merely to the outer world with all its interests and appeals, we soon become aware of an inner empti-

ness and yearning, and even the fascinations of the world without begin to pall upon us and to bore us. Similarly, if we live entirely within ourselves we grow introspective, selfish, and ineffective. Our real life consists in maintaining a rhythm between the outer and inner experiences—passing from one to the other continually. The life within must control the life without just as the life of the inner mind and spirit should control the life of the body. Our spirit is that part of us which is kin to God and which has the capacity to realize his presence, and fatherhood, and enabling power. Many of us have never developed our inner capacity for a spiritual relation with God, but are dependent on whatever stirs us from without. Therefore we never enter into our spiritual birthright.

When we look at Jesus, we see the perfect revelation of what we are meant to be. John, the closest of his friends, understood this when he wrote in the third chapter of his first letter, "Now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that . . . we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is." Our real self, therefore, is that which lives the earthly life in the power of the Spirit, following in the steps of Jesus. How

many of us would lose our weariness, and those lines of depression in our faces, if we decided now to let our spiritual life, and its requirements, control the way we use our minds and bodies and live in perfect harmony with Jesus' way of life.

How is it with us now? Do our daily relationships degrade or develop our spirit? A man is truly known by the company he keeps. Our habitual haunts reveal our inner selves. Said one woman of another, "If you do not find her in the house, look in the garden. She is usually out there digging around her flowers." Where the heart is, the footsteps tend. How easily we know our friends by their habits—so quickly does conduct conform to thinking. Swiftly, as birds on the wing, we dart to the home of our desire.

With some of us, our daily way of life is so remote from the interests of our real selves that we would never see Jesus if he were here in human form. To him, the earth was not so much a place as an experience; a set of conditions where his spirit could express the life of God. If he were here to-day, he could be found only where he instinctively belongs—in those places where his heart is one with human life. He lives where he loves to be. If the cry came suddenly, "Jesus again walks the city streets!"

we should miss him unless we were familiar with his haunts.

We would *never* find him in the place of strife, or division, and bitterness—if that is where our spirit usually lives. So often we read in the Gospels, "He withdrew from them," and the context tells the secret. People were in opposition to one another, striving against the new teaching of Jesus, distrusting the light and clinging to tradition. "Where two or three are together, in my name, there am I in the midst of them," are his words. In some mysterious way oneness is essential if God is to be present. Anything is possible to the two who *agree in his name;* one in all that the name of Jesus stands for in character and spirit. How often we sit in church, or with friends, and go away uninspired by a vision of Jesus because, although our bodies are there, our hearts are separated by critical, bitter, and envious thoughts. If even two or three of us had the courage to stay together until we conquered our selfish desires and became intimately one in mind and heart without reservations, miracles would happen. The promise is not to those who are together, but to those who are *one* in the Spirit of Jesus and together in some common desire.

Oneness with another spirit in common devotion to Jesus releases the creative power of God in reply to prayer. When we "tune in" with the Spirit of Jesus, we complete the circuit between God and ourselves and become vibrant with his life-giving Spirit. In this we are able to forget ourselves. It is easier to be unselfish when we voice the common desires of a group. Have we ever really lost ourselves in united intercession? How much of our prayer is a cry for personal satisfaction? Is oneness with others a habit of mind? If Jesus came to-day, perhaps we might miss seeing him because we would have such a long way to go before arriving at the house of perfect oneness where he is always at home.

It is easy to find our real self when we work with God as Jesus worked to supply the need of some one else.

> "No one could tell me where my soul might be.
> I searched for God, but God eluded me.
> I sought my brother out, and found all three."

The Saviour and Redeemer of men never rests so long as some one needs him. Even though we are unaware of it, Jesus is present in the heart, striving to release the captive spirit, to heal

the body, and feed the hungry. At the point where we come close to human need, at that moment, we shall find him looking into our eyes through some spirit in distress. We thought we were helping a poor waif or outcast; but actually we are touching our Lord and freeing him in that struggling life. Some of us withdraw fastidiously from the needs of others lest they come near to us. In this act we shut ourselves away from the actual presence of Jesus. "Inasmuch as ye did it not . . . ye did it not to me." When you last turned aside to avoid helping some one, were you not aware of a sense of loss, as though your spirit was disappointed in you? Our ability and resources are merely opportunities to realize the immediate Presence by satisfying countless children of men in whom Christ is longing to live. If Jesus came to-day, we would find him in the homes of the needy, whom we have neglected.

Sometimes we sit alone in thought and discover that others who may be sitting near us are remote, while the friend of whom we are thinking is intimately close. We have had moments when we seemed to be out of the body, traveling alongside some one with whom the heart is one. Such experiences prove the reality of our spirit,

and we know that we are more than material atoms assembled in a human body. In the same way the presence of Jesus is vivid as we concentrate our thoughts on the holy memories of his teachings and the inner meaning of his words. It is possible to read the Gospels without this experience. We may be reading merely for the story or to carry out a daily habit to quiet our conscience. When, however, we sit down, with a longing to remember Christ in order to understand better the meaning of life, and to recall his words, something happens. New gleams of light come; our hearts begin to glow with the discovery of joyous thoughts of which we had never dreamed. In an indescribable way our eyes are opened and we are aware of the living presence of our Lord. Perhaps some of us think these are words of imagery and not reality. If so, the reason lies in an empty mind. How can we recall the thoughts of Jesus which have never been stored up within us! We remember the backwash of business, household cares, and depressing remembrances of the day's anxieties. They bring no inspiration. Even our prayers may be a mere rehash of daily worries. We need then to recall the words of Jesus and whisper them slowly and distinctly until our real

self becomes conscious of the influence of his Spirit.

There is yet another place where we are sure of finding Jesus. He always walks with those who are on the open road which leads out to all the world, away from the cramped quarters of self-satisfied living. "I am with you all the days," is only true when the heart reaches out to include *every* creature in the priceless privileges of friendship with Christ. Our bodily existence may be confined to our own home, but the spirit can range the stars and work in sympathy and giving and friendship with all the world. Why are we so inert when such experiences are possible? We long to know our friends intimately. What keeps us from giving to our real selves the joys of a spacious life in friendship with the spirit, and purposes, and teachings of Jesus? Let us find ourselves by losing ourselves in devotion to him.

CHAPTER II

SIGHT AND INSIGHT

BEHIND every fact is a mystery. Back of the obvious lies the hidden meaning. So many of us think we know life when we merely observe the changing scenes and never understand the significance of what we see. It was one of the sorrows of Jesus' life that men had sight, but failed to have insight. Sight is physical, but insight is spiritual; it is vision illumined by the light of the inner spirit. The Psalmist prayed, "Open thou my eyes that I may behold the wondrous things out of thy law." Without vision we perish. The gift of insight is one of the surest proofs of the presence of God within us.

SECOND WEEK

And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth.

And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?

Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his

parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay,

And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

. . .

They bring to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

Now it was the sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

Again therefore, the Pharisees also asked him how he received his sight. And he said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

Some therefore of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, because he keepeth not the sabbath. But others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them.

. . .

So they called a second time the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner.

He therefore answered, Whether he be a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

They said therefore unto him, What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?

He answered them, I told you even now, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? Would ye also become his disciples?

And they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disdisciple; but we are disciples of Moses.

We know that God hath spoken unto Moses: but as for this man, we know not whence he is.

The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein, is the marvel, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he opened mine eyes.

We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and do his will, him he heareth.

Since the world began it was never heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind.

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?

Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee.

And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshiped him.

—JOHN 9: 1–41.

When the disciples of Jesus saw a blind man, they were more interested in a theological discussion about the cause of blindness than in helping him to see. Jesus accepted the fact of blindness and had only one concern: to connect him with the limitless power of the spacious life. The man had not asked to see, but obeyed the word of the stranger, went to wash in the pool, and came back seeing.

We cannot even imagine what it must have meant to a man, blind from his birth, to see, for the first time, his parents, the people of the city, the beauty of the hills, the far horizon, and the glory of the Temple. He was indeed a new creature utterly aware of a new world of possibility for him. It was hard for his neighbors to identify him, he was so changed. The leaders of religion, in the Temple, were mystified by this miracle. They too were more interested in explaining Jesus than in rejoicing that a blind man could see. Then their minds began to work out solutions that would explain the facts. So they began according to their ideas of what was right

and wrong. Notice the first item of supreme importance to them in verse 16. "This man is not from God, *because* he keepeth not the sabbath." They were more concerned about their rules for that day than that a man had found new life. They were afraid of a new power and a new truth. Instead of giving thanks, they were hunting for criticism and determined to blame some one. Even the parents were afraid to stand by their son and tell the truth and rejoice in his new sight. There is crystal sincerity in the testimony of the son. He had no theories, no theological wisdom, no knowledge of the intricacies of the law. All he knew was the fact that a miracle of sight had been worked, and surely God must be behind it; in some way Jesus must be related to God.

That was more than the prejudiced religious leaders could stand. Rules were more sacred than life; and they became guilty of the unpardonable sin, the sin of calling good evil, and evil good. And they acted on this sin and cast a man out of God's Temple because God had given him new life. The poor man must have been puzzled indeed, to be excommunicated from God's house because God had helped him. No wonder Jesus, when he heard it, went to search

for him, and gave him the joy of knowing his Saviour.

Then comes a solemn statement from the life of Jesus. He produces a strange effect upon all people. Some of them see; others become blind. (See verse 39.) There is no halfway ground. We either live the life of vision which sees the unseen, or fall back into darkness. Sight becomes either insight or blindness after we have come in contact with Jesus. The crisis comes when we decide what to do with new truth. Shall we have the heart of a little child open-doored to new life, or kill the new life and die? The test of understanding Christ is to understand our need. One day a girl, in cocksure words, refused to join an English class: "I don't need no English class," she said, "for I hain't never made no mistakes in English yet." Some of us are equally ridiculous in our ignorance of the language of the spiritual life. There is only one way to correct an illiterate spirit. We must bring ourselves into the light of the perfection of Jesus Christ as we see him in the Gospels.

For Study and Discussion

1. *How to Develop Insight:*

In every part of life we discover the truth of what we do by comparison. The carpenter applies a level to see whether his work trues up to a perfect standard. We correct our spelling by the dictionary, and measure our character by the perfection of Jesus Christ. There are two ways of losing the power of insight: (1) By adopting an imperfect standard; (2) by refusing to measure ourselves by perfection. See Proverbs 11:1 and John 1:4, also 1 Corinthians 4:5. Why is it necessary that light and truth should be the center of the world? Why do our judgments vary? In what ways to-day do we show the same fear that the parents of the blind man showed, and fail to stand by the youth of to-day? What are the danger spots in our religious assurance?

2. *How to Lose Insight:*

Read Mark 3:22, 23, 28–30. What is the real danger of sinning against the Holy Spirit? (See verse 30.) If we destroy or fail to use a perfect standard, to what condition are we reduced? (See Matthew 7:18, 20.) In what ways are we likely to commit the sin of blurring moral stand-

ards to-day? Is it possible to follow Christ in our thinking and be unlike him in our spirit at the same time? If this is true, what is the inference? Note the significant answer of Jesus in John 9:40, 41. Where does the sin of the carpenter begin? Before he trues up his work or after he discovers the discrepancy? What qualifies us to speak out and say, "I know; I see."

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the great love wherewith Thou hast loved us, in sending Thy Son to be our Redeemer. Open Thou our eyes and take the dimness of our souls away. Keep us true to our Saviour, and may his power so dwell in us that we too may help others to see Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Comment for the Week

It is not easy to live a spiritual life in an earthly incarnation. The things of earth are so close to us that we become more interested in what we see with our natural eye than in what we *may* see with the eyes of our spirit. The most important part of our life is just beyond

easy reach. It is only for those who really care that the secrets of the spirit are opened.

Sometimes we say scornfully of some one, "I wonder what he sees in her. I've lived near her a long time and never saw anything remarkable." That is not a reflection on the girl, but on ourselves and our blindness. Familiarity often breeds contempt rather than insight. It takes something more than nearness to open our eyes. It takes trust, and love, and a consciousness of need to open up the deeper and more wonderful part of a personality. The finest views are always from the top of a hill; and unless we care enough about beauty of scenery to toil up the hill, we shall miss it altogether. One of the depressing things about some summer resorts is the blindness of some people who prefer to sit on a veranda and gossip or play endless uninspiring games, when the God of the hills and heavenly visions is waiting to be discovered in his world.

It is even so in our experience with Jesus Christ. All the splendors of his beauty and teaching are waiting to inspire us, and yet we are so sure that we know all there is to be known about him that we do not open the Gospels for weeks at a stretch, and are bored if we are ex-

pected to read more than a few verses at a time in the Bible. Think of the multitudes of people in Palestine who were content to see Jesus pass by on his way through their villages and never cared enough to listen to him. They went about their business as if that were the only important part of life. They were not yearning to discover new truth about God, they never talked with Jesus, and they paid small attention to the fact that he had been examined by the religious bodies and put to death as a blasphemer and a disturber of their settled ideas. They little knew what they were to miss!

On that first Easter morning, when Jesus burst the bonds of death and appeared in his spiritual body, only a few people in his country ever saw him. We have no record that anyone saw him save those who were intimately one with him. The sublimest spectacle of all time was never seen by spectators who were merely interested in wonders. It required a heart of insight, tuned in perfect sympathy as a receiving instrument, before the risen Lord could be seen or heard. How awful to have been shut out from the sight of the living Lord! We can understand that spiritual law better now through the development of the familiar radio. We are only beginning

through the researches of science to discover the necessity of "tuning in" in perfect obedience to the laws of the air before we can hear the voices of the distant city. Some day we shall realize that only spiritual oneness can see spiritual presence. We must qualify lest we miss the heavenly presence.

Among those who saw him then, and would see him now, were the women who waited at the spot where they had last seen him. There is a continuity in experience, and a relation between what has been and is to be. Any future vision of Christ comes out of the past vision. Some of us in our teens had a Christian experience in which Jesus was vivid and present. Prayer was a joy, faith was natural, and expectations were limitless. Then something happened. Since then we have gone on in a religious habit, slaved in Christian service, but are joyless and almost prayerless. Our keen zest for spiritual life has gone. Can it ever come back? Yes, if, like Mary and the other women, you go back to the place where you last saw your Lord, and wait there. He will surely meet you at the precise point where you had your last vivid experience. Perhaps he asked you to do something then which you never fulfilled. He may have shown

you the sight of a higher life which you never entered. He may have shown you some sin which you never gave up. He may have called you to some service, and you turned aside to selfishness. And now you wish you could see him; for you need him sorely, and life has lost its zest. Have you the courage to go back, to retrace the steps you took on the side trail, and begin to walk once more on the main road where the living Christ walks? Get back again to the moment where he met you! You can if you will.

Another group who always have the insight to see Jesus vividly are those who are like his disciples of old. They had risked everything for him, and yet all seemed in vain now that he had been put to death. They were together in the upper room, suffering because of their loyalty to their Lord, living with the shadow of his cross on their life. The door was shut, and they waited in fear for whatever might result from their loyalty to him. There are times when we are called upon to stand for the spirit and onward vision of Jesus while others mock and scorn. To follow truth, unafraid, to live so utterly in the spirit of the God of Love that at any cost we may be brave to do and dare, often leads us into troubles; but in that upper realm of

spacious living we shall have an experience. Jesus himself will come into our little group and breathe peace upon us. The way to discover whether we are in that group of his friends, is to look into our hearts to see whether that Divine peace is there, or whether restlessness or hardness and malice are dominant. We may fool others, and fool ourselves, but we never deceive the Spirit of God. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control," said Paul in his letter to the Galatian Church. What a joy must have come to that little group when into the very midst of them Jesus became visible!

There are others too who will never miss seeing the living Lord. Those who stand by the common duties of life and go about their daily work, even though they are disappointed in their hopes, may have the vision. Insight is not alone for prophets. Jesus sent word to the disciples that he would go ahead of them into Galilee. Galilee was the home of Peter, James, and John, the place where they earned their living and where their friends knew them well. They had had high hopes, but the death of Jesus had seemingly thwarted them; so they went back again quietly to the old familiar task of fishing in the

same lake where all their hopes had been raised and then dashed to the ground. It was a disappointing life, too, because the fishing was poor. All night they toiled and took nothing. What memories and depression must have been in their hearts as they rowed their boats home in the pale light of the morning with the snow on Mount Hermon coral with the rising sun. A stranger stood on the shore waiting for them, calling out to ask whether they had any fish. "No," they answered. "Cast on the right side of the boat and ye shall find," said the stranger. They did, and lo! their nets were filled with fishes. Then John discovered the truth. "It is the Lord!" he cried. Peter couldn't wait to get to him, so he jumped into the water in his eagerness to see him. There stood Jesus, waiting to break bread with them in the old familiar way. They knew him, and in awe sat down on the beach listening to his counsel. "If you really love me," he said to Peter, "feed my lambs; tend my sheep." Give your daily service of fishing, and working, not for your selfish desires, but to serve those who need a shepherd's care and guidance. How can we walk in intimacy with the Shepherd of the sheep unless we too are shepherding? He said to those who followed him,

"As the Father hath sent me, *even so* send I you." Where are we? Out for our pleasure, or runnning away from our responsibilities? Are we taking up our daily tasks for the sake of others, laying down *our* lives for their sakes?

"That may be true," we say, "but are we not meant to live our own lives and find our self-realization?" Yes, but Jesus says to-day, as he said long ago, "whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall find it." Losing self is saving self. It cuts across the counsel of the world; but there is no other way leading to life. Sooner or later we shall find that Jesus is right.

CHAPTER III

THE PRICE OF THE SPACIOUS LIFE

THERE is a profound truth in that old nursery rhyme:

"Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean
And the pleasant land."

The greatest characters are made by the sum of an infinite number of small, related thoughts, acts, and habits. In our spiritual life a small trueness to the Spirit of Jesus may start a whole line of heavenly virtues. In the same way a small, conscious untrueness to the Spirit of the Master may lead us out finally into outer darkness. Therefore, we need to guard the small acts and dispositions of spirit. Let us bear this in mind as we turn to our Bible-reading for the week.

THIRD WEEK

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness;

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them.

For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse:

Because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

And changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

. . .

And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

Backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful;

Who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they which practise such things are worthy of death, not

only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them.

—Rom. 1: 18–23, 28–32.

Out of the long quiet months in the desert, Paul gained spiritual insight into the true nature of the religious people who opposed Jesus. He saw why they refused to live the spacious life. The shocking results of certain wrong attitudes of mind can be seen to-day as truly as when Paul lived. The path to spiritual death is so natural and easy, we scarcely realize that we are on the way.

The first fatal step is taken when we suppress truth deliberately and refuse to receive it. The word about "hindering the truth in unrighteousness" could be said of many of us who prefer not to be disturbed or upset in our ways of thinking, because we are content with ourselves. There never was a time when "the invisible things" of God were shining out so clearly through our study of what he has created in the world. Astronomy, electricity, radio, chemistry, and the physical laws all point to a more omniscient God and a more roomy life than we ever dreamed. We are beginning to see that every part of the world has a spiritual meaning. After God made the world we are told that he "saw

that it was good." We, however, with unrighteousness in our hearts, part company with God because we prefer a small experience to a big one.

The second step down is also a simple one: that of ignoring God and being *unthankful* to him. It is so easy to do this. We get so proud of our own points of view and our reasonings. Our hearts become dark because we are so confident that what we see is the only truth. We think we are wise when in God's sight we are fools. In the ever-widening horizon of knowledge it is dangerous to stand still. Life will sweep on and leave us stranded.

The third step is natural after the other two. We quietly exchange places with God, and exalt our belief in what we think and see over what he may want to teach us. God cannot teach anyone who is not open-doored to him like the heart of a little child. That is the reason why Jesus said that we cannot see the kingdom of heaven unless we become like little children in heart.

In the words which follow some of us can find ourselves, because we see the results of these three steps in our own inner experience. It is a sad catalogue, and every one of us ought to face ourselves in God's presence and ask him to trans-

form us into the Spirit of Christ. In some of us we may recognize a spirit of covetousness, maliciousness, hatred, envy, strife, deceit, whisperings of evil gossip, backbitings, boastings, unmercifulness, lack of understanding. Perhaps some of us who read this list may have felt a twinge of conscience when we mentioned one or another of the words. A lady once said about a group of supposed friends with whom she was spending the afternoon: "It is late and I ought to get back to my work, but I do not dare leave before the others do lest they all begin talking about me behind my back." With how many groups of people can you trust your character? How many things which were merely rumors have we whispered to some one else about some one else? Are we quick to approve of an unmerciful spirit when it is directed toward some one who does not agree with us?

In the last word about judging others, Paul says that spiritual death comes to us not only when we practice this un-Christlike spirit, but when we consent with others who practice it. What a beautiful world this would be if all the "earthborn clouds" that rise from unchildlike hearts might be blown away by the free winds of God's limitless heaven! We could then look

up into its height and breadth and depth, and stretch our spirits until we, too, breathe the clear air of heaven.

For Study and Discussion

1. *The Outer Counterpart of the Inner Life:*

Why is it possible for any one to live in the midst of beauty and yet not see it? What measures the bigness of the world for us? Read Hebrew 4:1–2. What is faith? Is it merely an intellectual process? Why is a spoken word empty without faith? In what ways do we "hold down the truth in unrighteousness" to-day? How does this show lack of faith?

2. *The Contribution of the Outer World to Inner Understanding:*

How can scientific discoveries widen our knowledge of the invisible God? If God created heaven, and earth, and all that is in them, how can we use them to discover his power and wisdom? (See Hebrews 4:6–11.) What prevents our seeing the whole truth? How are the conditions for spacious living made plain in John 7:17 and John 14:21?

3. *The Inner Meaning of Thankfulness:*

Can true thankfulness and self-conceit exist in the heart at the same time? Why not? What are our mental states when we are full of thanksgiving? What makes anything true? See Timothy 4:4. How does thanksgiving influence our moral decisions? Is one ever thankful for an evil? What is the relation between gratitude to God and spiritual reality?

Father of love who lovest us Thy children, so that Thou hast given Thy Son to save us from spiritual death, breathe into our hearts that same divine love. May we obey the command of our Lord to love Thee with all our heart and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Take from us hatred and bitterness, and may we know the reality of thine indwelling spirit because we see the fruits within us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Comment for the Week

Human nature is generally suspicious of goodness. We are so aware of mixed motives in our own hearts, that we are slow to believe in genuine sincerity when we see it. A man once stood on a city street holding a five-dollar bill which he

offered to give to any one who would take it. Crowds passed by with a skeptical shrug. "People keep real money when they have it," they reasoned; "no one would be such a fool. It's not a genuine bill." After a while a boy came along. He had no worldly wisdom, he did not know the evil in people's hearts; all he knew was that he was poor and that five dollars was a fortune. His heart's desire impelled him to reach out his hand in anticipatory faith, and lo! the man gave him the money. "That's no good," called out the cynics. "I'll ask the man in the bank," retorted the lad. A few minutes later he came out in triumph. The worldly wisdom had been mistaken; the man had been sincere. The money was good.

This story illustrates the two attitudes people have toward life in general. Some make themselves the center of life and they size up everything by their own selfishness. The only power they recognize is a centripetal force by which all the currents of life turn in upon themselves as the important center. They cannot understand anyone who has a center outside of himself. It is fortunate for the world that there are some whose power is centrifugal; an out-reaching energy instead of an inturning one. It is

the difference between fear and faith. Fear clutches everything it has lest it will lose something. Faith pours out everything it has, knowing that the supply of life is limitless. Fear thinks it is like a cistern of water which may go dry if it gives out too much. Faith knows it is "a spring of living water whose waters fail not," and so it gives and gives, as a continual experience. There is nothing more beautiful in life than a human being who senses his connection with the inexhaustible fountains of living water. Those who live in fear wait expectantly for the time when they may be able to say, "I told you so; he was too generous." That time never comes; but a more serious situation arises. As surely as God's sun shines, so the law of life is true that "a man's life consisteth *not* in the abundance of the things he possesseth." The fear which men fear comes true. They are found with a serious poverty of spirit, and lack of friendships, and empty joys.

In the days of Jesus, human nature was equally distrustful of any spirit which gave and did not withhold for itself. On one occasion great crowds were in Jerusalem at one of the great festivals. The last day had come and the joys were over and the people would soon be back

in their commonplace home life. The joys had come and gone. On that day Jesus stood up and cried out that if any thirsty ones would come to him, satisfying rivers of living water would spring up within them. Water was more precious than diamonds. Heat and parched ground were the common experience of all. A river of living water would have been a vast fortune, and oh, how every one needed it. Here was Jesus offering to satisfy them. Then old human nature began to work, and the multitude failed to take the Lord at his word. They missed the challenge. Their wisdom and the prejudices of selfish hearts blinded them.

It was plausible wisdom, too. Some, with mental integrity, said: "He is a prophet—a moral leader with an interesting new message. He may be a help to some; but as for us, we prefer Moses and Isaiah and those great ones of olden time. They are satisfying enough for us. It is a fine message and his words are inspiring. He is another of those morally earnest men who have abounded in our history. We know them; we are used to such teaching." And they were so satisfied with themselves that they never took the trouble to find out the truth. They missed the new vision.

Another group were quite convinced that Jesus must be the Christ whom they were looking for, but they were more interested in arguing the point with other men than in following Jesus. They were intellectually convinced, but did not act on their conviction. It was a mere matter of mental discernment. Just as their desires revolved about themselves as the center, so they exalted their own thinking and mental superiority. They enjoyed matching their brains with their friends, and proving how superior they were to them in mental strength. This group, also, failed to find and follow Jesus as the Redeemer of their self-centeredness.

There were others too who brought their superior knowledge and experience to confirm their own prejudice. They were those who could quote the Scripture accurately and knew precisely from what line the Christ was to spring, and in what town he was to be born. They had the Scripture at their fingers' ends; but—they never took the trouble to find out whether Jesus fulfilled the conditions. They were satisfied with superficial knowledge of him. *People said* he came from Nazareth in Galilee, therefore he *couldn't* be the Christ. There are many of us who are like them. We are those literalists who

see nothing greater than the letters of the word and miss the great truth of which the word is a mere symbol. In the days of Jesus such people relied on casual knowledge rather than take the trouble to find out the whole truth about him. They had not enough interest in him to "search with all their heart for the truth." Therefore, these people also failed to recognize the Lord of life. If he came to-day, would he be judged by the light of all the facts any more than the men of old judged him?

It was strange then, as it is now, how the men of the world discerned the truth more clearly than the religious teachers of truth. Common Roman officers, brutal men of war who represented the government by force, watched the crowd swayed by Jesus. "Why did ye not bring him?" complained the chief priests. "He is a disturber of our peace, and unsettles the people." "Never man so spake," these officers replied. They knew that Jesus was removed as far as the east is from the west from their sordid life. He was so unlike mankind. He must be God. They were spellbound by the vision of such purity. But their simple faith was soon discounted by the religious people who were so sure of their being right. They replied to the reverent spirits

of these ordinary men: "Who are you, ignorant and common officers? Have any rulers and high-up folk been taken in by this man? Do you pretend to be wiser than we who have studied religion for years? We aren't so easily led astray." And again the chief priests and Pharisees settled back in stubborn contentment with their own vision. In their intellectual pride and social superiority they discounted the simple-minded multitude. "They know not the law, and are accursed," said the wise ones. No wonder Jesus once prayed, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes." A mind open-doored to God is the only kind that discovers the widening path of truth.

Others failed to recognize the Lord of life because he was too close to them. "We know his mother. She lives in our village of Nazareth. Whence hath this man all these things?" (Matt. 13:54–58.) Thus they despised the intimate facts of life, failing to see that back of every fact in our experience there hides a spiritual reality. Only those will find it who accept the facts of the spacious, spiritual life, and its law of faith which leads people to be channels for

the power of God. This was the secret of Jesus' attitude toward life. He is here in his Spirit intimately touching our life. It is our hope of glory that he walks our village streets. How could we hope to be near him if he were throned in distant splendor, remote from human need, living only for himself?

"We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down;
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For Him no depths can drown.
But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He,
And faith hath yet its Olivet,
And life its Galilee."

CHAPTER IV

THE IRRESISTIBLE POWER WITHIN OUR REACH

THE most precious gifts of life come to us only as a reflex of what we have already given. Every one wants to be loved, but few are willing to face the cost of it. Love is the priceless essence of a life which gives itself joyously for the sake of others. It is the spirit that makes us kin to the sacrificial heart of Jesus Christ. It is synonymous with unselfishness. If once we have had the experience, all other relationships are poor in comparison. The power of love is available for any of us who care enough to win it.

FOURTH WEEK

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he entered into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

And behold, a woman which was in the city, a sinner; and when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster cruse of ointment,

And standing behind at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is which toucheth him, that she is a sinner."

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most?

Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair.

Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that even forgiveth sins?

And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

—Luke 7: 36–50.

Our social embarrassments usually are more distressing to us than our sins. It would be hard to imagine ourselves in Jesus' place at this dinner without shrinking at the thought of facing such a delicate situation as he faced. Imagine yourself in such a case. A prominent member of the synagogue has invited Jesus and his friends to dinner. The host is not quite sure whether or not he approves of him; but desiring to study him more closely, invites him to his home. In Oriental fashion the guests, removing their sandals, recline on couches behind the table. The meal has scarcely begun when an outcast woman, known to everyone as coming from the underworld, steals in and begins to anoint the feet of Jesus with perfume from an alabaster bottle. The owner of the house looks on with cynical disapproval, critical of Jesus for allowing such a person to come near him.

At some time Jesus had caused this woman

to see her sin and she had come under the spell of his presence. It took great courage to intrude on this party; but she was so full of love for the light that had come to her, she could not keep away. Bringing her best treasure, she poured it out over his feet, and as her feelings overcame her the tears rained down. Then sacrificing the conventionality, she let down her hair and wiped the feet with it.

Notice the exquisite tact with which Jesus met the sinister thought in the heart of his host by the tale of the two men who were forgiven their indebtedness. The story was so detached from the present occasion that the Pharisee could not help judging it accurately without personal bias. He was supercilious, however, as he gave the right answer. Jesus showed him how his answer fitted the woman and himself. She had been forgiven much, therefore loved much; while the host, who thought he needed little forgiveness, loved so little that he had not even shown the usual courtesy to his invited guest.

Herein is the true character of love. It pours itself out for others and comes back from others in self-forgetting gratitude. We love God for what he does for us in proportion to the *estimate* we place on its value to us. It isn't the

amount of forgiveness, but what it means to us. Sometimes a little thing straight from the heart of a friend means more than lavish abundance which comes without love. It is quality, not quantity, which determines the value of love. It does not follow that the greatest sinners make the greatest lovers of God, but depth of appreciation is often found in proportion to our conscious need. Appreciation is a quality of heart which grows from the sense of the worth of anything as well as a sense of need. When we see the perfection of Jesus, it rebukes our imperfection. Sometimes we think a garment is white because we are looking at it by gaslight. When we get it out in the bright sunshine, it may look gray and soiled. This is the reason why we need to keep ourselves continually in the light of the life of Jesus, that we may know our need and love him for what he is—the goal of all our desire.

Jesus sent the woman away in peace, reinstated by him to clean living, glowing with a new sense of dignity; her love appreciated and publicly recognized. How deep her joy must have been to discover that the forgiveness of her sin was so complete that she was a new creation in Christ Jesus; that sincerest love, as Paul describes it, "taketh not account of evil."

For Study and Discussion

1 John v: 14–18. Can love exist apart from sacrifice? How is the teaching of Jesus, with respect to losing one's life in order to find it, true of a life of love? What is love when sacrifice is lacking? Why might loyalty be described as the courage of love? How can we restrict our love merely for congenial people in the light of verse 15? What is the heart of social service?

Matthew 9: 10–13. This kind of love is difficult for us to believe. We have so little faith in God's power that we will not believe that love can cure sin and restore purity of life. We live as though certain people were outcasts even though they have been healed by the power of Jesus Christ. It is thought aristocratic to have nervous prostration, but disgraceful to have smallpox; yet both may cause death, or both may be cured. Why, then, are we so loath to believe in God's power for certain individuals whom we ostracize socially, even after they have been healed of their uncleanness and have pure hearts? Why is that feminine quality of compassion in women turned to hardness of heart in respect to other women? Why do men have one moral standard for themselves and another for women?

Luke 18:9–14. Write out a modern paraphrase of the Pharisee's prayer. What is the difference between gratitude and self-congratulation? Is it wrong to aspire to certain standards in religion? If not, what quality of spirit keeps one humble?

Heavenly Father, help us not to despise one of Thy little ones. As Thou didst send Thy Son to release us from our bondage to sin, may we too be the embodiment of Thy forgiving love. May we put no limits on the cleansing power of the sacrifice of our Saviour and his cross. As he cleanses and forgives, may we too forgive, remembering our own need for redemption. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Comment for the Week

Centuries ago a religious writer described God as "An Eternal will for others." He was trying to understand the relation of God to men and women. Everywhere he turned he saw beauty, resources, sunshine and fruitful fields, far distant horizons, and unlimited power poured out in abundance that humanity might have every blessing. God has literally poured forth his

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bounty, longing for a response of understanding and gratitude from human hearts. When we live so that others rather than ourselves are the burden of our thought and concern, we are approaching the highest possible experience in life —the life of love.

The most overworked and misunderstood word in the English language is this small word "love." We realize the poverty of our native tongue in certain respects when we try to express some of life's deepest meanings. In this case we need at least a dozen words, which we do not possess, to express the fullness of the life of love. As it is, we think of it in so many different ways. To some it means mere physical attraction, which is personally magnetic and irresistible when men and women are urged by that mating instinct which is inherent in every human being. To others it means a thrill of feeling whenever they find themselves the object of the devotion of family or friends. To some it is the glow of perfect understanding between congenial spirits. To others it is related to the familiar possession of family and neighbors, and those indispensable ties which bind people together as they meet the common experiences of daily life.

To Jesus, love was greater than all those mean-

ings, and yet included all. Jesus was the objective manifestation of the heart of God, whose nature is Love. Love as Jesus revealed it is the outgoing, creative energy which exists for others in the same way that the sun gives forth its rays of light and heat to call forth life and energy from every living thing on earth. The sun does not expect rays of light to come back to it. It is loved for what it creates in us and in all nature. It does not pick and choose what it will bless and love with its shining. It pours itself out on the evil and good alike: it simply fulfills its nature. The sun lives to *shine*.

If Jesus came again, would we be kin to him in this meaning of love? Have we any real love at all? How could the sun be a sun and shine only on a few people who walk the earth? Yet we think we are loving when we beam on those near and dear to us and a few friends here and there. There are whole races and nations, and many of our neighbors, who never could bask in the warmth of our hearts, because there is no warmth toward them. The peculiar teaching of Jesus which made Christianity burst the limits of the Jewish people in Jerusalem was contained in this truth: that the God of Love cannot be restricted to a few here and there, but is ade-

quate for the whole world. A Christian is one who is kin to Jesus in his nature; one who is so like Christ that people recognize in him the same characteristics. Jesus is the Saviour of the Gentiles and of sinners as well as the Messianic Redeemer of his chosen people, *because* God *so loved* that the whole world might come to its own if it would leave the caves of darkness and come out into the light. This is why Jesus is called the *Sun* of Righteousness who arises with healing in his wings.

What revolutions would be wrought in some of us if we allowed the Spirit of God to shine out continually with self-forgetful love! Everybody would feel it who came near us. We say, "My heart isn't big enough for everyone. If I tried to give myself to everyone, I would be worn out." Sometimes we say of some one else, "He gives himself out too much." Not long ago a nurse was heard to say, "I have to make myself as impersonal as I can, for if I attempted to sympathize with the pain and suffering around me I would soon be exhausted and drained of all strength." These plausible reasons furnish many of us with adequate excuses for selfish living and the withholding of compassion. Is such thinking valid? Yes, it would be valid, if we

look upon ourselves as reservoirs which can be drained dry if there are too many outlets. But if we know that we are really connected with the boundless resources of the power of God, there could never be such a thing as a drained life; "squeezed dry," as we often express it.

The difficulty lies in the fact that in our human life it is necessary to withdraw from life in order to have more life. We need to withdraw at times to the inner chamber of our being and *"shut the door"* for the *purpose* of quickening our connection with the power of God. Such a withdrawing for such a purpose is necessary; but as soon as every part of our being is again pulsing with the love of God and the sense of his presence, we can be equal to any multitude and able to love and to give ourselves as Jesus loved and gave himself. If our heart is filled with the love of God, we shall not be able to keep from loving any other child whom God has sent down here on the earth. Like the sun, he will shine eternally through us. Our personal love will then be only the particular shade of color in the crystal glass through which the love of God shines. We become more radiant with his light shining through us than we could ever be with the sparks of our own instincts and urges.

Many people have stumbled over the meaning of the command, "Ye shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The real meaning is more truly understood when we paraphrase it as referring to the full-grown child of the father in whom his type of personality is fully developed. Or it may be explained by the character of the Father who is perfect in *love,* without any shadow of variation; like the sun shining always in full strength, regardless of what is happening on the earth or whether people are rejoicing about it or not. Are we really kin to Jesus, like him in the character of our love?

When unhindered love fills us, there is no danger of our judging others and picking flaws in them. When the sun is darkened, the earth is darkened. When our hearts are darkened by evil thoughts, those whom our rays touch reflect the same darkness. When we see this in their lives, it is certain that it also exists in us. We see only in others what is within us, even as we walk through the fields and see only the flowers and trees which we know. The measure of mind which satisfies us in another person is an accurate measure of our own. The happy person finds the world full of joyous spirits; the sad soul finds all nature weeping. Let us frankly

look at the reasons for our animosities and then confess to God our own secret sins, which will be like unto those we have seen outwardly.

But some one may say, "This sounds logical; but when you find so many unattractive people in the world, how can you love what you do not like?" There is only one way. The spirit of sympathy and divine love is born of our ability to see not only what people are, but what they may be when God's love possesses them too. There is no joy in life like making it a habit to see those two visions of everyone; the man that is, and the man that may be. It is the surest way to stir our hearts with a love that cannot rest till the joy and power in our hearts lives in them too.

Jesus has promised to *manifest himself* to those of us who keep his commandments. (John 14: 21.) And he makes his meaning plain in the words, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another; *even as I have loved you.*" (John 15:21.) May there not be a reason why we have missed his presence? Which kind of love have we—ordinary human love controlled by human impulses, or the unrestricted, self-forgetting love of Jesus?

CHAPTER V

SPIRITUAL VENTURES

WHENEVER we are disinclined to venture out into new paths, we are becoming wedded to old age. It is not a matter of years, but an attitude of mind. God evidently meant us to keep the heart of youth, because Jesus' way of life is an eternal challenge to press on into fresh experiences. The men and women who recognized in Jesus the power to conquer new realms of life had the joy of seeing what the ordinary crowd called miracles. Some of us believe they were impossible even for Jesus. Such a point of view proclaims our inability to appreciate the vast dimensions of the spiriutal life which cannot be measured by a yardstick.

FIFTH WEEK

He came therefore again unto Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him

that he would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.

Jesus therefore said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe.

The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. The man believed the word that Jesus spake unto him, and he went his way.

And as he was now going down, his servant met him, saying, that his son lived.

So he inquired of them the hour when he began to amend. They said therefore unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

This is again the second sign that Jesus did, having come out of Judea into Galilee.

—JOHN 4:46–54.

How different is this story of the king's officer from the usual philosophy of the common proverb, "Seeing is believing." It was as great a strain on human nature for this Roman nobleman to go to a poor Jew for personal help as it would be for any of us in our pride of family or Church to be willing to learn from someone whom we despised. Most of us couldn't do it! Why was this man, who was not a Christian, able

to rise to such heights of humility? It was *love* for his child. He cared more for what he loved than for his own antagonisms. Someone in the circle of his care was in desperate need; what were ancient grudges and prejudices when they came between him and the claim of love? The sin of ignorance is pride; the virtue of wisdom is humility. A teachable mind willing to learn from any source, if so be it can help anyone in need, is one of the rarest gifts humanity ever possesses. It opens up the whole world.

Like ourselves, the nobleman expected Jesus to help him by the usual approved method—to come down to his house and lay his hands on the sick son. How often do we give directions about the means God shall use to help us! We set our hearts on the precise plan of our salvation; we expect the miracle to work according to our way of thinking, in the traditional way. Jesus tested the heart of this man, and suggested that he had only the kind of faith which believes when it sees something happen before its eyes. The man continued to insist that the usual method be used. In the same way we pray, thinking that our intensity of desire for a certain event to happen must be answered.

Then came the final answer: "Go thy way;

thy son liveth." It must have seemed like a dismissal to some of them who stood near. Some of the cynics would be sure to say, "It is easy to say that; how do you know?" Picture the thoughts of the king's officer! Conflicting considerations came into his mind. Perhaps this Jewish teacher wasn't willing to help him because he was of the ruling class! Or perhaps he couldn't do anything and so was putting him off! How could anyone do anything for a sick child far away, whom he had never seen and could not touch! It was a fairy tale perhaps; such things never happened. Then the voice of a teachable spirit spoke within him: "You were willing to lay aside your prejudice against this man of a nation ground under the heel of Rome, and have come so far; now follow his advice. Perchance he is greater than anyone you have ever known. In the midst of this mental conflict, the humble spirit wins. The man *believed* the word that Jesus spake unto him and went his way." It was utterly contrary to all human reason; but on he went, not in disappointment, but in trusting, expectant faith. Such faith is always met halfway. As he went, his servants met him with the glad news, "Thy son liveth." In his joy he did not forget to verify the fact that

the day before at the seventh hour the fever left the child—the very hour when he had had the conversation with Jesus.

At this very point a temptation must have gripped the nobleman, as it usually grips us on such occasions—he thought that the healing and the hour with Jesus were mere coincidences. How often we think to ourselves: "This would have happened anyway; how do we know that the unseen and absent Lord had anything to do with the cure?" Thus unbelief enters in. What a supreme faith we have recorded here, in that this stranger believed so earnestly in what Jesus had done that his whole house believed also. If we think this an ordinary act of faith, we have only to read the record that this was the second sign that Jesus did. It was the first time Jesus had healed anyone; therefore the father of the child had no report or experience to depend upon for hope. It was sheer trust, and child-like faith.

For Study and Discussion

Read John 14:12; John 15:7, 8.

What keeps us from taking Jesus at his word? If he were here, would we believe what he said, especially if he used some new method of

supplying our need? Why do we put more faith in the ability and willingness of our friends, whom we may influence, than in the adequate power of God to open up new paths to power? Why do we resist any possibility of a spiritual adventure? What do we lose by this spirit?

Heavenly Father, breathe into our hearts a love that will triumph over our prejudices. Forgive us that we have so long ignored the command of our Lord Jesus to love one another. Give us strength to-day to work a miracle in our hearts by intercession for those who seem to be enemies. Help all those who are living in fear to triumph in the love that casts out fear and creates a conquering faith. Grant to us this power that we may be like unto Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Read John 15:17–21; John 16:33.

How does this teaching fit into the promises of power in the section above? If the average Christian is free from the crucifying experiences of Jesus, in what ways to-day do we meet them? Why did he choose to suffer in weak-

ness sometimes when he had all power? What is the legitimate use of power? What conditions must we fulfill? Which showed the greater triumph: to suffer death and rise to immortality, or to escape death by a miracle? Why? What similar parallels are there in our experience to-day?

Comment for the Week

It is far easier to believe in the power of Jesus Christ now than it was two thousand years ago. The centuries of history have multiplied countless evidences of men and women who have become omnipotent because they followed in the steps of Jesus and lived by the principles of his life. We do not have to read books in order to know this, because each of us has seen at least one human being who was aglow with the vital energy of God. Wherever such a life goes, people begin to think about God and become wistful with new desires for power.

Power is a magic word to-day. Everyone wants more of it. It would be easy to assemble a crowd any day of the week if new personal powers could be guaranteed to all who came. Now, as a matter of fact, infinite powers and capacities are within our reach, if we only

realized it and put all our intelligence and determination at work to discover and use them. We are like a family grubbing away at dry farming in the Southwest, trying to wrest a precarious living from the ground, and finally sell out in utter discouragement. Then comes a man who buys our land and, setting his intelligence to work, discovers treasures of oil. Most of us are not willing to dig so deeply into the soil of life. If we did, we could connect with the power God has in store for anyone who will make the venture.

Is anyone ready to begin a venture now? If so, let us create the conditions by which we may be touched by the presence of God and know his reality. Let us enter into an experience of light. What is the problem which troubles us at this moment? It need not be a religious question: it may be any baffling situation which confronts us, something which is in our pathway like a stone wall or a locked door, an overwhelming trouble or intellectual fog. Whatever it is, we want *illumination.* We need to see light shining in our darkness.

God *will* give us light. Just as truly as in the beginning of the world, God has given light. It is the first evidence of his real Presence. The

beginning of all human history starts with the familiar words: "Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good." Thus light becomes the first contact between God and what he has made. If this is so, why do we go about with depressed spirits as if our darkness were too great for God to dispel?

Here is a challenge for all of us now. Let us stop reading at the close of this paragraph and withdraw into the inner room of our heart where it is dark and full of confusion. Let us hold in our mind this thought. "God is light; he can illumine my little darkness and bring order out of the chaos in my life. I will give him the opportunity now to bring light into my darkness. Speak, Lord; I am listening." Then wait quietly in silence. It may take several minutes for us actually to get alone with God in our mind. Concentration on one thought does not come easily to most of us. But the voice will speak within us. The inner truth will be heard in a still small voice, and we shall see ourselves, our mistakes, our one way out, the next step, the right clue to follow. From this experience

we shall know the reality of our connection with the source of light. Why read any further? Prove the truth of this challenge now. Jesus, the revelation of God in human experience, adds the assurance of this truth: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.)

Another spiritual adventure which would usher us into new realms of power comes through the ministry of intercession. It is amazing how many Christians are skeptical of this power, even they who profess to believe in prayer. For them prayer is merely begging God for something which begins and ends in themselves. They believe God can drop blessings down into their lives because he is all powerful; but they think of themselves as devoid of any power to bless. Now if all we think about in prayer is a mental attitude in which we sit still and let God work wonders for us, we have missed the whole meaning of the Christian life. Jesus showed us the true ideal; prayer is fellowship in a common work of creating new conditions. We complete the circuit of power and become the instrument for bringing light, power, and warmth to others, just as the current of

electricity supplies these three powers to the world through the circuit of wire. Intercession is the act of connecting our hearts with God for the express purpose of bringing power to some one else. Some day we shall be amazed when we realize how much we might have done to lift the lives of others, if we had only completed the circuit between God, ourselves, and the other man. Samuel knew this truth well when he said to the disobedient Saul, "God forbid that I should sin against him in ceasing to pray for you."

A venture in intercession may lead us far afield. It will necessitate laying aside our prejudices and bitterness and calling out love instead of enmity. If we cannot honestly and lovingly pray for anyone whom we condemn, we have no right to be critical of them in our speech. Criticism is discernment without love, and not according to the mind of Jesus. Even in the end of his three long years of patience with the religious leaders of his time, when he analyzed the spirit of Pharisaism and showed the woe that must come to them if they persisted in their way of life, he utters a truly broken-hearted lament at the close of this summary of their mistakes and cries out: "How often would

I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." (Matt. 23:37.) The yearning love to gather the scattered, stumbling little ones under his protection is like the sorrow of mother love, not the condemnation of a judge.

We need to give ourselves to the service of intercession because it is the outward motion of love. Hatred and criticism are inward-turning forces which can actually wreck our health and shatter our connection with God. We all know this in our daily experience. When we are bitter toward some one, or angry, we affect our solar plexus and cannot eat or sleep. We raise our blood pressure to the danger point of apoplexy. Since we cannot remain neutral in our relationships, we must turn to the intercession of love as essential for bodily, mental, and spiritual health. Therefore this adventure brings new experiences to ourselves as well as power to others.

The results of intercession lead us into the realm of miracle-working. A miracle is an achievement by means of laws that have been unused or unknown. When by unselfish love we have done *everything* in our power to work with God in creating new possibilities for others,

we have the thrilling adventure in the spiritual life of seeing power released beyond what we have asked or thought. God never works miracles for those of us who selfishly want to be the sole object of his power. We must work together with him to the limit. Then, as a natural result, the seemingly impossible thing becomes possible and actual in our experience. Love outreaching to its limit is the faith which moves mountainous masses of inert life. Why do we sit so contentedly when this omnipotent power is within our reach? Archbishop Trench sums it up for us in his immortal words:

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in thy presence can avail to make;
What heavy burdens from our blossoms take,
What parched ground refresh as with a shower.
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all—the distant and the near—
Stand forth in sunny outline brave and clear.
We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power.
Why then should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever faint or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with thee?"

CHAPTER VI

SOME TESTS IN THE LIFE OF LOVE

MOST of our difficulties come from the inner conflict between the love of self and the love of others. Even after we have settled the question and begun a life of service, the conflict reappears in more subtle forms. Does a life of love mean renouncing self that we may indulge others, or does love imply working together with others along the same principle of unselfishness and the creation of spiritual strength? Some parents sacrifice themselves for their children, making them selfish that father and mother may be unselfish. Jesus' way of life never ended in such confusion. Even his death on the cross was not consummated to free us from the same sacrificial love. In our study which follows, we have the experiences of the life of love fully illustrated. It is not so simple as it seems, but involves comradeship with Jesus in some of the most searching tests of life.

SIXTH WEEK

And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the loaves; and he gave to the disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

And they did all eat, and were filled.

And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes.

And they that ate the loaves were five thousand men.

And straightway he constrained his disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before him unto the other side to Bethsaida, while he himself sendeth the multitude away.

And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray.

And when even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

And seeing them distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them, about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea; and he would have passed by them:

But they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was an apparition, and cried out;

For they all saw him, and were troubled. But he straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

And he went up unto them into the boat; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves,

For they understood not concerning the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

—Mark 6:41–52.

An unexpected providence came to five thousand people. They were faint and hungry and far from home. Jesus had held them enthralled by his teachings, so that they had forgotten food. How many of us have ever had such an experience with the Master? He had also foreseen the reaction that would come if they went away fasting. He never forgot the balance between the physical and spiritual needs, and so supplied them with food for their body as well as the spirit. Never before had such completeness of life come to them. They wanted to make him King. How perfect life could be, thought they, under the leadership of someone who could supply all needs as they arose. They were all swept by enthusiasm. Even the disciples must have rejoiced that now at last Jesus was coming to his own.

It was a supreme moment for Jesus: another recurrence of the same temptation he had met before; to rob people of their destiny as co-creators with God by making them social parasites, free from self-denying love. It is always

easier for any leader to do the work of ten people than to set ten people to work. It would have been simpler for Jesus to go through the world demonstrating his marvelous power than to teach people how to develop their own power. The people like it better too; but the end of the process is demoralizing. How many parents have learned to their sorrow that in relieving their children of all responsibility they have weakened their character? The plan of God for human growth is infinitely better than a series of special providences. The five thousand have grown to many millions who are ever looking for a King who will relieve them of the strain of having to think and strive and develop their capacities and be unselfish.

Jesus sent the disciples away at once to the other side of the lake. He had to handle the crowds himself. The disciples would have been as short-sighted as the crowds. It must have been a fearful strain on Jesus to choose the difficult path and follow his Father's plan. He needed to get alone and pray, in order that the clamorous voices of his friends might be silenced by the voice of God. What do you do when your friends choose you as the goal of their desire? Do you say, "The voice of the people

is the voice of God," or do you wait to see whether the still small voice within confirms or denies it? Every great man who undertakes a great task knows that he must wait for the inner guidance also. He must possess his own soul. His prayer will follow the lines:

"Often in my heart is pealing
Many another voice than Thine,
Many an unwilled echo stealing.
Through the halls of this Thy shrine
Let Thy still, small accents fall.
Master, speak and silence all."

Meanwhile the plan of Jesus for the disciples was bringing them into difficulties. Storms arose, and with all their hard rowing it took them eight hours to go three miles. Obedience to their Lord resulted in tumult rather than peace. Some of them must have said: "We should have stayed on the other side. It was a mistake to start out this night." How often we reason thus. If the problem doesn't yield to *easy* solution, we think we must have mistaken the guidance of God. We wait for the assent of all concerned before we go forward. The line of least resistance is for most of us the line of guidance. It may be or it may not be. The real gauge for guidance

is to ask whether the decision is according to the full teaching and working principles of Jesus. After we have settled that question sometimes we shall find the path smooth, at other times stormy. Spiritual weather conditions are incidental to the life of obedience to God.

When Jesus' plan for the disciples brought them to the end of their resources, a special providence came. Jesus gave them a new manifestation of his protection and power. On the crest of the stormy waves, he walked in living presence to help them to their destination. Their moral sensibilities were so blunted that they could not recognize Jesus when they saw him. When he actually came into the boat and brought peace, they were still inwardly amazed and spiritually dull and slow to take in the joyful truth that God always works with us for victory over any circumstance in life, if we obey him.

The life of love often leads us into storms. Obedience to Jesus does not always bring the quietness of inaction. It does, however, give visions of a Master who is adequate for all emergencies. His love for us is never demoralizing, but always developing.

For Study and Discussion

1. *The Making of Character:*

Why is God's plan for our development really better than our desires? Why is public approval so uncertain? What are the qualities of strong character and how are they best developed? Are there any strains of weakness in our modern method of training up our children, and if so, what? Read 1 Corinthians 2:6–12. What spiritual factors are listed which should spur us on to perfection?

2. *Pitfalls in the Path of Unselfish Love:*

Read 1 Samuel 3:12–14. What was the sin of Eli? What is the difference between strong and weak love? Between a merciful and easy-going love?

Read Acts 14:8–18; also Acts 3:11–13, 16. In what ways are we tempted now to assume credit for spiritual power? How can we keep from it? How do people seek to commercialize the life of love? What happens to our inner life if we exert our influence to gain personal ends? How can we tell the difference between gratitude and flattery?

O God, our Father, who carest for all our need, help us to trust Thee for the future. Teach us to know that nothing is impossible with Thee when we live not to ourselves but for others. Give us the same heart of compassion for the need of the world as was in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whose name we claim they power. Amen.

Comment for the Week

Christians differ in their attitude toward daily living. Some drift along through the days, going through the usual routine with mechanical precision. They work as long as they can and then pass on, leaving others to go through the same process. There is no sense of purpose or goal in their thoughts. Some of them even wonder how they can "kill time," when the squirrel-cage whirl of small events slows down a bit. Their one aim is to keep from doing anything that may shut them out of heaven when their days here are ended. Even in such a stimulating age as this, untold thousands live on from one incident to another, looking forward only to one hope—an escape from what they call the burdens of life.

Others believe that life should be utilized by them for gain and comfort. They use their brains and plan their days with the object of bringing under their control as much of life as they can grasp. They see values and ways in which they can use them and store up for themselves far more resources than they can possibly use. Such people are usually called our successful citizens, and often are the leading members of the Church. There are still others who believe that the chief business of life is to promote some organization, institution, or idea which will hold people together in a common group of understanding.

It is no wonder that Jesus seemed mad to many of the religious leaders of his time when he dared to look at life from a different point of view. His whole attitude here on earth was that nothing short of eternal life will satisfy the depths and capacity of our human nature.

> "For the love of God is broader
> Than the measure of man's mind."

One day in the life of Jesus a lawyer asked him how to find eternal life, and was surprised when the Master told him that within the complete range of all life outside of ourselves lies

the spacious realm in which we are to live. To reach out in the devotion of love to God, and to include all the neighbors on earth as part of our greater selves, is real living. The whole world is God's providence for us, and every plan by which we shape our days must recognize the breadth of their relationships, or there is no eternal value to what we do. Thus our inner life consists of two relationships: the connection between ourselves and God, and the connection between ourselves and others. The two are parts of our whole human experience. Each contributes to the reality of the other. It is natural that the outgoing energy of love should include both God and man. Every life is bound up in the eternal life of God and we cannot ignore any part of the whole without suffering. The hand dare not say to the foot, "I do not care for you."

In the matchless story of the good Samaritan, in the tenth chapter of Luke, Jesus showed the perfect balance between the plans we make and the larger demands which a spacious spirit is sure to meet. Love to God will help us to use our days for the highest purposes. We dare not drift along like children at play when there are great works to be done. True love to our neigh-

bor will lead us out into such service that we shall not have any time to kill.

We all remember the story. It is about a man going along the country road who fell among thieves. They had the attitude toward life that anything they could seize was theirs by right. So they robbed this man and left him half dead by the roadside and went away to enjoy their ill-gotten gains. This is always what happens when we do not live the life of love. Any person in the world might suffer from unneighborly robbers who care not for others, but for their selfish gain; who want to supply their needs at once by the "grab" method rather than by producing something of use to others and receiving money from them. A robber is one who does not live by the law of love, and does not coöperate with others. He lives only for himself at the expense of others. All the robber instincts are latent in the best of us if we are more concerned for ourselves than for others. Selfishness in a child who always chooses the largest apple for himself, or in the woman who rejoices in some advantage which she has secured in spite of others, is incipient robbery. It is this spirit which Jesus came to destroy. Is it destroyed in us?

Into this situation Jesus introduces the priest and the Levite. They were the inheritors of the religious spirit and the spiritual leaders of the people. They see the man who has been exploited by the selfish grabbers, but they have pressing business and so pass by on the other side. The priest must go on his way to some service where he is to officiate. The Levite probably has much business on hand: if he stopped to relieve every sufferer, the day would go and his program would not be carried out. They pass by the poor victim so as to avoid the difficulties. They also must have said to themselves: "The laws ought to be enforced; the Romans ought to police the highways; it's the business of the government."

This attitude is a familiar one, even among the best of us. Most of us haven't time, we say, for the life of love. It interferes too much with our easy and comfortable routine. Most of us find it easier to love God whom we have not seen than to love our brother whom we have seen. It is easier to walk with God and listen to his voice, if it does not disturb our well-ordered living, than to walk with our neighbor for whom we would have to readjust our plans. To love God and walk with him is inspiration, but to

love our neighbor and walk with him involves perspiration.

As we look into the program of our Churches and religious organizations, in what do we rejoice? Do we congratulate ourselves that our Church is in such a well-ordered section of the community that we have no problems to meet? Is our membership so choice that everyone counts it a privilege to move in our society? Are we glad to be unembarrassed by the presence of the poor and outcast with whom we would not want our children to mingle? If Jesus should come to-day, would we find him seated in the best pew of our church? Would our religious program be so attractive to him that he would want to work with us in service? Some of us are glad to help the orphans in the Near East when our hearts are cold to the orphans in our town. Why is this? The secret generally lies in the fact that we do not have to change our plans, or worry over the perplexities of helping those who are close to us. We can invest a little money in the Orient and then go about our comfortable way, pretending that we are more interested in foreign than home missions. What we really mean is that we are more interested in clearing our own path from

contact with bruised and needy humanity. Truly did Jesus expect us to go out into all the world; but he also said, "Begin *first* in Jerusalem." Interest in the needs of the whole world is the widening reach of a love which cannot be satisfied till everyone rejoices in the protection of God's love.

Over against the attitude of our spiritual kinsfolk, the priest and Levite, Jesus describes a man of no pretensions who has one supreme characteristic. He faces life squarely and meets his daily responsibilities, *as they come.* He reasons thus: "This man is mine to help because he is in my path. I am not responsible for all who are robbed and in need, but I must be neighbor to all who cross my path." The heart of compassion cannot pass by those who are near. The Samaritan, who, by the way, was a foreigner, living in another country, was also on important business bent. He was probably hastening to some urgent appointment, because he was riding an ass. He had not time to walk. Nevertheless the claim of the spacious life of love was too pressing. In obeying the larger life of love he could be sure that the lesser life of business would be included somehow. So he stopped his journey and gave first aid to the man

from his own supply of oil and wine. Then he put forth even greater effort. He put the wounded man on his ass and walked himself. When they reached an Inn he put the poor man to bed and put forth more effort by taking care of him—while his business waited. Then the next day the life of love brought other demands. So he paid the innkeeper his shillings in order that more care should be given the man while he was away on his business. The life of love spent itself still more lavishly when he said to the host that he would be responsible for whatever more the man might need before perfect health returned. Then he went on his way to resume his plan.

There are some of us who are saying, "I dare not begin such a life, because I would never know where it would end. It involves too much." Yes, it involves much. There is no limit to the spacious life of love. This attitude of Jesus seemed indeed mad recklessness to the people of his day. Jesus surely was more than man or he never could have so gone against the grain of human nature. Some one has said that we have never had a contagious case of real Christianity. St. Paul warns: "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Have we the courage this year to plan our service according to the teaching of Christ?

"I behold in thee
An image of Him who died on the tree.
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,
Thou also hast had the world's buffets and scorns,—
And to thy life were not denied
The wounds in the hands and feet and side.

. . . . . .

The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need.
Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives *himself* with his alms feeds three—
Himself, his hungry neighbor, and ME."

CHAPTER VII

AVOCATION VS. VOCATION

FEW of us make any distinction between a livelihood and a life. Our ideas of a livelihood are so out of proportion to our real human needs, that it takes all our life to make them possible. The result is that we enslave our spirit in the service of things only to find in the end that they do not satisfy. Then age comes on all the more quickly because of the depressed, disappointed spirit within. The secret of power lies in a true sense of proportion between our real life and the business of making a living. If we follow Jesus' way of life, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, we shall find that the other things we need are indeed added unto us as he promised. What is the goal of our ambition and the instinctive desire of our heart? If we face this squarely, we shall know our true relation to the satisfactions of life.

SEVENTH WEEK

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

And he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my corn and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

—LUKE 12: 16–21.

And he entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by name Zacchæus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich.

And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature.

And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.

And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner.

And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold.

And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

—LUKE 19: 1–10.

Sometimes we imagine that if we put Jesus Christ first in our hearts we shall have to leave all business and go about preaching or teaching the Bible exclusively. The very fact that Jesus spent all but three years of his life on earth as a carpenter, proves that doing the will of God and pursuing a trade are perfectly possible. The important question to decide is whether we do business for business' sake or for the Master's sake. The historic words of the old cobbler show the difference; "My business is to preach the gospel," he said, "but I cobble shoes to pay expenses." My vocation or life calling is to live Jesus' way of life; my avocation or business

may be teaching, or stenography, or motherhood, or any other contribution to the life of the world. There are these two stories of rich business men in the Gospel of Luke which illustrate the kind of business principles which Jesus condemns and those he approves. Both had avocations, but only one had a vocation. The first is the farmer of our lesson, who assumes, because by inheritance or money he acquired title to a piece of ground, that all the fruit of the ground is for his exclusive use. He has far more than he needs—thanks to the gifts of God—in fertility of soil and growth of the seed. His one thought about it all is that it is his own, and that he must build bigger barns so that he will have enough to eat for years to come, even though his neighbors may be starving. God rebukes him as a fool whose life and breath will be required, perhaps that very night. He was rich for himself alone and had no vocation, or no purpose about which his labor and resources and interests could center. There was no ideal beyond the animal existence of eating, drinking, sleeping, and traveling around. God intrusted him with the ability to make money for a divine purpose, but the man saw only his own selfish interest. He failed God.

The other rich man was Zacchæus, a despised publican who collected taxes for the government, and was in no sense a religious leader. He had grown rich through his business, but his spirit brought Jesus as a guest to his house. He had the heart of a little child. He did not care whether people laughed or not when he climbed the tree. He did not let anything hinder him from his desire to see Jesus. Nothing could have kept the Master from going to his house. The eager spirit of the open mind is never disappointed. It is not surprising to read that he shared half his goods with the poor, and restored fourfold if he had wronged anyone. His eyes were on others and not on himself; therefore he saw the needs of people. He won the friendship of Jesus.

Some say that it is not possible to succeed in our work if we apply the Christian law of love to our business relationships. The story of Zacchæus contradicts this, and the story of countless followers of Jesus testifies to it. It takes courage to follow, because we go against the grain of human nature; but the rewards more than justify our faith.

For Study and Discussion

Read Malachi 3:7–10.

The tithe is a recognition of God's share in the rewards of our human service. It keeps alive in us the sense of being a coworker with God. How would our methods of making money be changed if we recognized God's right to one-tenth of it? If we are careful not to rob God, will we be likely to exploit our neighbors? Why not? Write down five ways in which paying our obligations to God brings blessing to us. Suppose we followed this course, how would it change our point of view? If Jesus came to-day, would we dare to let him inspect our methods of work and the proportion of our giving?

Read Acts 3:1–10, 12.

Which giving is easier for most of us: money or self-forgetful service? Why is it difficult to make our avocation a vocation? Peter made his attendance at the Temple a means of bringing new life to a lame man. What are our motives in churchgoing? How do they account for so many uninspired services? What are the great opportunities in the different avocations for

making Jesus real to people? In the life of a teacher? as a grocer? as a lawyer? a doctor? a mother? How did the avocations of the men in Luke 9: 57–62 keep them from the great vocation to which Jesus summoned them?

Heavenly Father, every good and perfect gift comes from Thee, and it is of Thine own that we give to Thee. Help us to hold all our resources in trust for Thy use. May we, by means of them, create untold blessings for Thy children. Forgive us that we have ever exploited others for our gain instead of expressing to them Thy love. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Comment for the Week

Jesus' way of building up the kingdom of God was contrary to all our ideas of how it should be done. He organized no promotion scheme, and used no salesman's methods for inducing people to follow him. He staked all the future for Christianity on a certain quality of heart which he knew would lead his cause to victory. That quality is the spontaneous outreach of the childlike heart which follows what it loves re-

gardless of cost or consequence. A child does not find it difficult to rise above conflicting opinions and customs and traditions. Youth is fearless, and loves to explore and to follow new trails. The child spirit is not measured by years. It may persist all through life. If it does not, we lose the possibility of seeing the kingdom of heaven. The words of Jesus are solemn ones in that eighteenth chapter of Matthew: "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall *in no wise enter* into the kingdom of heaven."

There were so many people who could not enter into the limitless life where Jesus lived, because they had resisted the child spirit within them and substituted their cautious and prudent worldly wisdom. They could not rise above their old ways of living. It is infinitely pathetic to see what they missed by refusing to have the child heart.

There was a day in the life of Jesus when he was passing through the country for the last time before his death on the cross. It was an eventful day because of the many people who resisted the chance to enter into Jesus' way of life. The first inhospitality came from an entire village in Samaria. Jesus desired especially to

get near them, and he sent certain messengers ahead to prepare for his coming. Think of the honor that came to an obscure place to have the Lord of life with them where they could talk with him about all the hopes and fears of their lives! At last he came—and they would not receive him! Why? Because he was on his way to Jerusalem, the rival center of worship. The Samaritans were like many of us who are so sure that our own point of view about religion is right, that they could not rise above their own prejudices long enough to listen to Jesus. They would not let him stay in the village, and actually sent the Lord himself away.

John the beloved disciple was so stirred by this discourtesy that he wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the whole village. How Jesus towered above it all in his divine Spirit when he rebuked the resentment of his friend by saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Sometimes we try to prove our love to God by being unloving to others. The two spirits cannot be in the same heart at the same time. God's love is like the sun which shines with equal warmth upon the good and evil alike. It is the evil man who cuts himself off from God by refusing to let the light of love

shine in his heart. The childlike heart does not discriminate; it ever reaches out. A mother once lamented to a friend: "My little girl plays with every one and doesn't seem to know any difference. I have such a time keeping her from undesirable playmates." We ought to thank God for that quality of heart, and spend our time filling the hearts of our children with such pure and high ideals that the undesirable child will want to be like them or will flee from them, as the people treated Jesus.

There were other things which kept people from the boundless life of Jesus, and still hinder people to-day. Jesus was passing along the road as he passes us in our daily life now. Sometimes we sing, "Do not pass me by," when we should really be praying, "Lord, open my eyes that I may not let thee pass by." It is not that he leaves us, but that we leave him.

Any day that Jesus passed by would bring embarrassment to most of us. Our business, or *busy-ness,* as it could be spelled, has enmeshed us so completely that we have no freedom. "This is the day when I planned to make that visit"; or "My husband expects this." Or, "If I had known, it would have been possible; but now I am pressed by many things which need

attention." In short, we see to it that our whole thought is given over to our business, so that we have a good alibi for excusing ourselves from the claims of our spirit. With what pious regrets we say, "Yes, how I would love it—but——!" It would not be convenient for the business of most of us, if Jesus came to us today.

There are many reasons for this embarrassment. Chief among them is the fact that really we prefer to meet the expectations of our fellow mortals rather than those of our Lord. We put the business of the world before the business of the spirit. It is more important to us, therefore we bend our conduct to human appeals. Most of us would find ourselves in the same position of the men in the ninth chapter of Luke. Jesus was passing by, saying to the people, "Follow me." Three men were moved by the call. They realized that here was the chance for the higher life, and they all wanted it. The first one seemed eager to follow, because he thought it would be good business for him. His real love was material promotion, and he didn't mind its being spiritual business if only it was good business. Jesus read his thoughts and pricked the bubble of his expectation by pointing out

that it might mean fewer material things; he might not have a place to lay his head. The man let Jesus pass by and went back to his real love —to gain the world perhaps and lose his soul.

The second man felt the constraining call of Jesus at an awkward moment. His father had just died; he must bury him—then of course he could come. It seemed so plausible; but perhaps, after the long days of mourning and funeral lamentation were over, Jesus might have been on his way to the cross and the chance of becoming a disciple gone forever. The man couldn't help his father; he was gone; but traditions and customs kept the son from spiritual freedom. He chose to disappoint the Master rather than his relatives.

The third man also had a plausible excuse. "Let me say farewell to my family, settle up my business; then I will follow." The word of Jesus is very explicit here. He who starts to follow, and then looks back to other claims, is not "fit for the kingdom of God." To some of us this seems too stern a teaching. We can recall moments in our experience when we were thrilled by an inner urge to give ourselves wholly to the service of God. We were on the point of doing it when we thought of our family and

other personal affairs and said to ourselves: "I must talk it all out with them and finish up my business, then I will do what my heart longs to do." Then, what happened? We discovered other elements in the situation of which we had not thought until some of our friends reminded us of them. Friends voiced their disappointment, their feebleness, and superior counsel, until we silently made a choice. We chose to obey the voices of our friends rather than the voice of God. There are thousands of men and women who at that moment turned from spaciousness to littleness; from triumph to obscurity. Having made the second-best choice, we live the second-rate life. Some of us know in our hearts that all other claims are to be subordinated to the first claim of honest discipleship. "I will live as a disciple of Jesus and do my business according to his way of life," said a man once. The kingdom of God is worth risking everything. It is not Christ *or* business, but Christ and a business which can bear his scrutiny.

For most of us this will involve a complete reorganization of our life. At present our affairs generally radiate from our own will, or the wills of others. The secret of the Christian

life is that obedience to Jesus Christ is to be the first and central principle of our life. He must be the great magnetic center for the electric current. If we are disconnected with the center, the spirit, like the house, remains in darkness. This truth was what lifted Paul from ordinary living into extraordinary fame. He left everything, the moment Jesus appeared, and followed him. He describes his attitude of mind in those immortal words: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2:20.)

The Master may be here now, urging some one of us to enter into the limitless life. Let us *now,* leaving everything to his future guidance, rise up and follow him!

CHAPTER VIII

SPIRITUAL ALCHEMY

THIS is an age when people demand reality. It used to be a convincing proof of Christianity if people could give a reason for the faith within them by a series of statements about what they thought about Jesus Christ. Now such statements have little weight with the young generation unless they are the logical inferences from a way of life. Spiritual power is judged not by what people claim, but by what they use in transforming daily experience into spiritual values. By our fruits the world judges us. Our true riches are those which are produced by transmuting those things which are seen and tangible into values which are unseen and intangible.

EIGHTH WEEK

Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful. And judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released:

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

—LUKE 6: 36–38.

And he said to him also that had bidden him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

And thou shalt be blessed; because they have not wherewith to recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

—LUKE 14: 12–14.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.

The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!

No man can serve two masters: for either he

will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

—Matt. 6: 19–24.

The possibility of storing up heavenly treasures from earthly resources was constantly in the mind of Jesus. He taught us to walk the earth, using all its substance for heavenly purposes. There is much comfort in such an objective. Some one has said: "What I saved I lost; what I gave away I kept." It is the true point of view. We are here to use the resources of earth to meet our needs and the needs of others. What I need, God means to supply: what I want may be had if it is not wholly for myself.

This is such an unstable world that we are not sure of anything unless it is transmuted into spiritual treasure. Banks fail, crops are ruined, thieves plunder, decay destroys, stocks fluctuate, men exploit and deceive, our judgment is often mistaken. All of these, and many more factors keep us in uncertainty. The only way is to live to the full each day, and get something more than material satisfaction out of the earth.

It is the same also in the realm of our personal relationships. In most of our social life

nothing is transmuted. We are given a party and we square ourselves by giving a party in return. Each is at the same point as before. We have merely exchanged earthly resources. It is merely a redistribution of what was already there. There are no spiritual satisfactions. If, however, we use our resources to bless the lives of those who have nothing material to give us, the return is a spiritual reward. Love, grateful prayers, courage, new strength, joy, kindness, and all kindred things flow in our direction. None of us can afford to live in a community without these gifts. They are the only satisfactions of real friendship. Besides this, Jesus adds that other reward which shall come to us in the resurrection. Even our capacity to enjoy material things disappears unless the fragrance of grateful friendship is in the atmosphere.

The law of love, which gives and finds itself richer, is as sure as the law of magnetic attraction. The pansies that are never picked and shared are succeeded by others that dwindle in size until their beauty has gone. "Give, and it shall be given unto you," said Jesus. Even the old prophets knew this truth. One of them said, "There is that which withholdeth, and tendeth to poverty." The reason for this is that our

largest gifts come from without, and what we give is useless to us until it is transformed. We eat food; but it is useless to us and even gives us pain, unless it is transformed into blood, and muscle, and nerve. We live not by food, but by what the results of food bring to us. So it is in the great body of human society. We may put our labor into producing food, but it is worth nothing to us until it is given back to us by all the coöperating life around us.

Most of the sadness in this world would disappear if we really took Jesus at his word and began to transform the little we have into the values of the spiritual life. Real poverty is measured not by the size of the pile we own, but by the value we extract from what we have. Many people who are rated poor by the standards of a bank are far richer than the man whose money means only a pile of metal. "It's a pity Tom did not go into business instead of social service," said a rich citizen to his friend; "he would have been a great success." "I'd rather have Tom's success," he replied; "you have ten thousand dollars, but he has ten thousand friends; I think he's the richest man in town."

For Study and Discussion

1. Make a list of what your community needs in order to bring health, strength, culture, beauty, and friendship to its boys and girls.

2. What are some of the ways in which we could contribute more to the life of our Church and community? Who is the best loved man or woman in your town, and why?

3. What is our principle of meeting human needs? Which brings the larger results, giving others what we do not want, or sharing with them that which we ourselves want and know they want? Which is greater, and why? What things that you need can only come to you through spiritual alchemy? Why is it impossible to have them save in following Jesus' way of life? Read 1 Timothy 6:17–19.

4. Read 1 Kings 17:8–16. Compare this sharing of poverty with Genesis 18:1–14, when the rich Abraham shared with the messengers from God. What great blessings came from these experiences? Were they material or spiritual? What are some of our greatest human needs which are not material? Read Hebrews 13:1–3. How has this been worked out in your experience?

Our Father, wilt Thou redeem all the impulses of our being that they shall help us to attain everlasting life. Help us to transmute those things that are seen and temporal into values that are unseen and eternal. Help us to remember what we owe Thee and give to others understanding help and sympathy; through Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to find all those who need fullness of life. Amen.

Comment for the Week

The most fascinating part of human life is the power we have to create things that never were seen before. In everything we possess there are possibilities beyond our imagination. We see corn growing, and think of it as only something to eat; but men have begun working with it in a laboratory, and lo! countless products are created which bless our lives. They range all the way from starch to soap, paints, sirup, lubricating oil, and rubber substitutes. God seems to have left much undone so that we could complete the work of creation, and have the joy of discovering new possibilities.

This power is not only shown in what we can

do with mere vegetation like corn; there are possible changes in living things too. Miracles take place even in the ordinary mill pond. At the bottom of the pond worm-like creatures crawled about on the little sticks and stems of the marsh grass. One day one of them felt an urge to climb up the stem and explore the top of the pond. As it rested there, a change came over the grubby body, and lo! in the sunshine a beautiful blue dragon fly unfolded its wings and flew away into the air, never again to crawl in the depths of the pond.

What a parable this is of our own life as human beings! We are born into the ordinary environment of a small town or country life. As we grow up we are conscious of a divine discontent urging up into a higher realm of living. We discover the radiance of Jesus and long to be like him. So we follow his teaching and yield ourselves to his control and enter the experience of being born again into the life of the spirit. We live and breathe in a new element. The Christian life is as different from ordinary life as the dragon fly, in the sunshine and air, differs from the life at the bottom of the pond. A Christian is one who *must* live according to the law of life in Christ in order to survive.

He cannot live in the lower and the higher element at the same time.

This is the trouble with most of us. We try to live one day by the law of the spirit and another day by the law of the earth. We become failures in both and are neither good worldlings nor good Christians. The chief difference between the spiritual and earthly realm is that God is the center and possessor of everything. The selfless life is the heavenly life, while the selfish life is the earthly life. The higher life knows that all things belong to God and his gifts to us are for use in God's name. The lower life grabs everything it can for its own selfish satisfaction. If we hug riches for ourselves, we cannot claim to be living a life of faith. One reason why prayer is meaningless and church boresome lies in the fact that we say we are in the spiritual realm while in truth we still live in the earthly realm. A new experience of reality would come at once if our words and life sounded the same chord. Be either hot or cold; lukewarmness is nauseating both to God and to ourselves.

The greatest joys of life come when we practice spiritual alchemy: when we take something we have, and draw from it spiritual riches. We

practice alchemy all the time, but it is chiefly to release joys for ourselves. We have had endless chances to transmute our resources into spiritual values, and we have let them pass by while we hugged our riches to ourselves. The story is told of an Alaskan miner found dead of starvation with bags of gold in his hand. He had money to buy food, but no food could be bought. His gold was valueless because there was no chance to exchange it for those things he needed. All his resources could not keep him from starvation. What use to us are the gifts of human life if our spirit is starving!

What are some of our possessions that lie close at hand which we might use to create spiritual riches? Closest to us is the gift of health: the power which makes it possible to work with our hands, to go on errands of mercy, to minister to helpless, bruised, lonely humanity in the way Jesus ministered. For what do we use our health and strength? For our pleasure, and for idleness, or for service to the children of men. How many would miss us if we passed on into another world? The other day a woman lay dying from an accident. The tragedy of it was her state of mind. She moaned out to a friend: "I have only been 'a hand' at card games, and

I have nothing to show for all those hours." Think of all that a strong body might accomplish to release untold possibilities for joy.

There is also the gift of education: the power to enter into the thinking of the world. A book may be our greatest friend. It may open possibilities which will transform our lives. How do we use our education? Are the books and magazines we read leading us into truth, beauty, far horizons, purity, and visions of God? Or do they smirch with the mud and slime of the earthy life and darken the windows of our soul until we see everything through a murky atmosphere. Is our mental power used for gossip, and criticism, for foolish use of hours in trivial pursuits, or for bringing the best things to children, for community service, for the removing of prejudice?

The gift of a house, how is that used? For a sleeping place or eating place, or for the refreshment of friends and an atmosphere in which Jesus loves to dwell? Hospitality has become almost a lost art these days, because we imagine that people come only for creature comforts, such as food and elaborate entertainment. We feel that we must give people things instead of our friendship; therefore we wear ourselves

out in preparation for guests and try to satisfy ourselves with "annual affairs." No one ever performed spiritual alchemy that way. The real spiritual values grow out of some welcome to a stranger, some refuge for a lonely soul, some space wherein boys and girls can find joy and restful fun, free from evil influences; a sharing with some foreigner the comfort, peace, and freedom of one's own castle. Threadbare upholstery may be a sincere ground for pride if it means that it has become so by the constant use of a long succession of friends who have found rest and shelter and friendship through that house.

There are also those resources of influence, and money, and leisure. All these are precious trusts from God. It is possible now to reach out and touch the whole world. One may, even in remote centers,

> "—live in a house by the side of the road
> And be a friend to man."

We all have some friends who look to us for their ideals. They imitate our clothes, our way of speaking, our standards; and take our opinions for their own. Even though we may disclaim this fact, yet we know that it is true to

some extent. The important point is that we realize the direction in which we are leading others. Is it easier for our friends to live an abundant life of spiritual power because of us? Some one may say, "I do not want to interfere with others; what I do is my own affair!" Saying so does not make it so! Unless we live in solitary splendor on a desert island we may not ignore our connections with others without peril to our own souls.

And what of the gift of children! What are our ambitions for them? Would we rejoice to have them used by God in his task of redeeming the world? Could we rejoice over the honor of having our son or daughter leading the cause of Christ in a non-Christian land? If Jesus came to-day, would he find that the issues of our life are directed toward what the world calls success, and position, or the release of spiritual forces? The obscure Andrew little knew what he was doing for the world and for himself when he brought his brother Peter to Jesus. He might have lived a simple unknown life had he not been true to his vision of Jesus and wanted those near him to have the same vision. Andrew did a whole life work in that one day. Peter's glory was only possible because of An-

drew's first touch. There are many of us who long to do great things for the world. Perhaps in our home there may be a boy or girl who is a potential Peter to crown our life with the highest spiritual achievement. What a pity it would be if through selfish love we fitted the child to be a fish merchant, when he might have been, like that noble disciple, the leader of all the race of Christians coming down through the ages in the Church.

In the wisdom of God, all the results of spiritual alchemy are hidden from view. They await the patient hearts and hands which count it their greatest joy to work together with God to complete the work he has begun. Perhaps in the ages to come we shall find that this was the very reason why we were sent down to this earth as living spirits. If we disappoint the expectation of God, we shall disappoint ourselves also, and miss the whole meaning of life. Let us even now get into the laboratory of our daily life and begin to transmute the temporal into eternal values.

CHAPTER IX

COSMOPOLITAN CHRISTIANS

THE rapid process by which the world has shrunk to the dimensions of the common experience of ordinary people is a modern miracle. Our entire globe is accessible to us; frontiers have been abolished; there is no West to be discovered. What is whispered in New York reverberates in Peking. The next miracle needed must take place within us. Our minds and hearts must be enlarged to the size of the world with which we now have to grapple. Little David must meet another Goliath, and run to meet him in the same strength of the God who alone is adequate. In this larger realm of the Spirit, Jesus met the world single-handed and conquered it by love. We too must follow in his steps if we are to realize the purpose of God when he sent us here to live in this special period of human history.

NINTH WEEK

And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and at the point of death.

And when he heard concerning Jesus, he sent unto him elders of the Jews, asking him that he would come and save his servant.

And they, when they came to Jesus, besought him earnestly, saying, He is worthy that thou shouldest do this for him:

For he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue.

And Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof:

Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say the word, and my servant shall be healed.

For I also am a man set under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

And when Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned and said unto the multitude that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole.

—LUKE 7:2–10.

Some of the most remarkable events in the life of Jesus were connected with members of another nation. To the Master all people, of whatever race or nation, were welcome. In this story of the centurion we have another instance of a foreigner, a hated Roman soldier who in his life could teach us all many lessons in spiritual living.

In the first place, this proud member of the conquering race had a heart big enough to go to great trouble for the sake of a sick servant. The Greek word indicates a very tender relation, that this servant was precious to him. That in itself lifts this Roman above many of us. We so often look upon those who serve us as merely a part of our household equipment. We would scarcely ever say that they were precious and dear to us. Most of the housekeeping troubles to-day would vanish if there was human friendship between mistress and maid.

The beautiful relation between the army official and his servant made him willing to do extraordinary things. He interested some elders, representative men among the Jews, the hated nation, and induced them to seek out Jesus and interest him in the healing of the sick man. It took great breadth of mind to stoop to such

coöperation, but his spirit was of the special sort which broke down barriers. The Jews were glad to do this service because this Roman had been equally considerate of them. He had convinced them that, instead of despising them as a conquered people, he really loved them. He had even given his resources to build them a synagogue, even though he could not by right worship there.

This was the kind of spirit Jesus loved, and he went with the delegation back to the soldier's house. Jesus was always ready to respond to any call like that. Then came a strange message. The centurion sent some of his friends to apologize to Jesus for troubling him. The tender consideration for a stranger, whom he had wearied with an enforced walk along a dusty highway, overwhelmed the anxious soldier. He wanted the power of God to enter the body of his sick friend; but he was not so selfish in his grief that he made demands on others.

A heart as constantly loving toward all his fellow-men could not be other than a heart of faith in God's love and power. He accorded to Jesus the same authority in his realm of government. This was a new experience for Jesus. Elsewhere the religious leaders were always

jealously questioning his right to power. Here was a man of power recognizing to the full his authority in the realm of miracle. It was such faith as Jesus had not found in all the people of Israel. The servant was not only healed, but the blessing of Jesus rested upon this remarkable man.

For Study and Discussion

1. What stands in the way of our breaking down barriers between ourselves, and strangers and foreigners? What attitudes toward others do we cultivate in our children? From our table-talk is it easy or difficult for our families to be swayed by the spirit of love?

2. *Read Psalm 67.* What reason is given for a prayer asking personal blessing? Is the motive a desire to create envy among the nations or to extend equality of privilege? How does verse 4 indicate the true relationship?

3. *Read Acts 2: 5–12.* How do we know that the teaching of Jesus was meant for the whole world? In whose language did the nations listen? Is it necessary that all the world think as we do before it can become Christian? What is the one essential attitude of mind? Which is

the greater ideal, to have unity or uniformity in our world relationships? In what respects does God expect our experience to be enriched by the differences of other races and tongues? How can we this year widen the reach of our love?

Lord Jesus, the reach of Thy love includes the whole world. Forgive our pettiness and prejudices. May others find it easier to draw near to Thee because of us. As Thou didst give Thyself without measure, may we too esteem others better than ourselves and serve in lowliness of mind. Forgive us for every social condition that degrades humanity and is tolerated by us. Open our eyes to our world responsibility that we may do our full part in Thy name. Amen.

Comment for the Week

A garden is a rare school for the teaching of our spirit if we work in it, and watch the unfolding plan of God in the silent processes of nature. In a quaint old town there is a certain small plot of ground surrounded by a brick wall, where hosts of visitors come. There flowers grow in a riot of color and form. Tall hollyhocks and creeping alyssum, queenly roses, tiger

lilies, and mignonette bloom in profusion. One revels in the artistry and beauty which has been lavished on the earth for the joy of man. Each flower has its loveliness of perfume, shape, or tinting, proclaiming the wondrous skill of our beauty-loving Heavenly Father.

Why is it that we rejoice in the variety of garden flowers, and yet fail to appreciate the endless varieties of human spirits who incarnate the image of God on this earth? As a rule we can only enjoy our own kind. We insist that there is only one color and form and expression of human life that appeals to us. We lose the zest of living because we surround ourselves only with those who are precisely like ourselves. Quite naturally we become bored; and more than that, we lose the full revelation of the life of God on earth. It is significant that when God chose the special spot on earth in which to reveal his Son, he chose the highroad of the then civilized world where every nation and tribe and tongue passed through Palestine as a great crossroad. There East and West, North and South met. It is our Father's purpose that none of the people of the earth shall be ignored; that Jesus and the good news of the spiritual life shall be the heritage of all. Following in his steps, we

too are meant to be citizens of the world and have an abiding interest in all mankind.

Many of us are controlled by our pride of race and the special interest in our corner of the world, rather than by the ideal of a spacious life of world citizenship. We know that Jesus died not for us alone, "but also for the whole world," as John says in one of his letters; but we hesitate to measure our horizon by such a wide sweep. Some of us try to think spaciously, but restrict our living to the chosen few, with the result that our thinking shrinks always to the dimension of our practical living. We imagine we have fulfilled the purpose of Jesus when we give money to send some one, not of our own kin, to some far-away land to teach the way of the cross. Then we go about our streets talking about keeping America for Americans, and rejoicing that we have so few "foreigners" in our midst. We pity other localities which have been "spoiled," we say, by people of other tribes and tongues, and try to keep our own habitation solely for our own kind.

There is no doubt whatever but that it is far more difficult to live as a world citizen than within the range of a small locality. It is hard to have our own pet ways interfered with, and it makes

us uneasy to get glimpses of other points of view which compel us to think in more universal thought forms. A student from a small town, going to a large city to study, declared that she was quite upset in her thinking because she had never realized that there were so many fine Christians in the world who were not of her denomination. The pain of readjusting her thinking made her quite miserable for a time.

It may help us to live the spacious life if we realize that, unless Peter and some of the other prejudiced disciples had been willing to accept Gentiles and foreigners into Christian fellowship, we would never have had the knowledge of Jesus. They were brought up in the inflexible traditions of the Hebrews and it was a big struggle for a man like Peter to stretch his mind to the point of thinking that any of us had a right to the great spiritual gifts of Jesus Christ. Even Paul, the one who was called to the Gentiles, must have had long weeks of mental struggle in his desert experience, trying to think out what possible connection any people who were not Jews could have with Jesus. His letter to the Roman Gentiles proves how deeply he had to think about this.

It took a dream and a voice from God to

make Peter willing to accept the call of the Roman centurion, Cornelius, and share the Gospel with him. To be able to say, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons," was a complete change of heart for him. Could we really say that? In the heart of most of us there is an inherited conviction that we are the favored people above others in the world and we are quite as prejudiced against foreigners, as we term them, as were the Jews who called themselves "the chosen people." Some day we shall discover that the only supremacy we can claim is the degree to which the Spirit of God controls us. The truly chosen people are those who are transfigured by the radiance of Christ. We pity those who are blind to beauty, deaf to music, and uninterested in books, and yet excuse our illiteracy in the spiritual life. Dress, language, riches, books, and customs are really unimportant details in the life of the spirit. They are mere externals. We need to push through these things to the real personality behind them. Acquaintance with even one member of another race or nation will open up a whole new world to us. In the hospitality of the hated Roman household Peter found himself united to Cornelius in spiritual understanding. A cosmopoli-

tan is one who is at home with all people in any part of the world. Jesus was a perfect cosmopolitan.

Perhaps the reason why these larger visions of God do not come to us is because we haven't the prayer habits of Peter and Cornelius. There are voices in the world to-day to which we are deaf because we do not "tune in" with them. Prayer is the receiving station where we hear the voice of God. The world has become so small to-day that we are brought near to all the voices of distant, strange peoples. This is the day when it is possible to get a picture of the universal revelation of God in human life and to become the friend of all the world. In the business world even our farmers are finding that we need the whole world for a market. Our houses are filled with many things that have been contributed by the whole world for our comfort. The very clothes we wear are international in character, with silk from Japan, styles from Paris, and dyes from Germany. Why not contribute to the spiritual life of the world by our sympathetic understanding and giving and praying? If we are world-wide in business and provincial in spirit, we shall soon find that the glory of God has departed from our hearts.

If Jesus came to-day, would he find us sympathetic toward all his friends everywhere? Or would he find us selfish and fastidious, allowing few people to enter our circle? We do well to look at our national exclusiveness in politics, and our reluctance to enter into Church unity. Let us ask ourselves whether prejudice against those whom we call "foreign" controls our spirit, and allow them the outreaching love of Christ. Jesus prayed for all those who would believe on him, "that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that 'Thou didst send me.'" The width of our love is the only convincing proof to the world that God is love.

There are many ways in which we can develop a cosmopolitan spirit. No matter how tiny our community may be, it is possible to have on our tables books and magazines which will bring the whole world vividly before us. We can interest our children in reading travel books and the fascinating stories of other lands rather than the feverish plots and uncertain morals of the local "movies." We can widen out their culture and knowledge until their minds will be too spacious for pettiness and gossip, and too big to be self-centered. We can redeem some of the lost time spent on the weary round of one or two empty

pleasures and bring into our life the great values of the world. A book is like a ship which carries us out from our local boredom into the new adventures. If there isn't a library in your town, why not have the joy of organizing one as a new activity for leisure days.

If we cannot travel ourselves, there is always some acquaintance who does. Give that one a commission to bring back to your group, something of interest that will help in international understanding. Most of the people who visit New York or any great city see nothing more than shops, theaters, and crowded hotels. There are hosts of interesting places to visit where one could find all the fascinating novelties of strange customs and new understanding of world problems. What fresh inspirations would come to us if we only cared enough!

There is no comfortable halfway purpose in the Christian life. Genuine love cannot be measured out by spoonfuls; it overflows like the resistless current of a river. A cosmopolitan life does not depend upon geography; it is an attitude of mind. It is one with love, because love is like the sun, forever reaching out with its warmth into every dark corner, searching out hidden things. When we turn away from a

larger life, we turn away from love. Each age must live up to its largest opportunities. The peculiar opportunity of our day is world citizenship.

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

CHAPTER X

THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS' WAY

AN idea may revolutionize the world if it is in harmony with the eternal truth of God. There is no dynamic as powerful as a new attitude of mind. Vast consequences follow like a mighty river flowing from a tiny spring from which fresh water bubbles. Jesus was unique in the way he staked all the future of his kingdom on the small group of men and women who were ready to die for the new truth which he had opened up before them. He knew it would make its way irresistibly because it was eternal life; and eternal life can never die. "The words that I have spoken unto you are *spirit,* and are *life,*" said he to the disciples when they were mystified by the way in which the teaching of the Master contradicted their old ideas. Perhaps we too need to achieve a new attitude of mind and discover that the uniqueness of Jesus' point of view is what will bring to us, also, *spirit* and *life.*

TENTH WEEK

And the scribes and the Pharisees bring a woman taken in adultery; and having set her in the midst,

They say unto him, Master, this woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act.

Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such; what then sayest thou of her?

And this they said, tempting him, that they might have whereof to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground.

But when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

And again he stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground.

And they, when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst.

And Jesus lifted up himself, and said unto her, Woman, where are they? did no man condemn thee?

And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way; from henceforth sin no more. —JOHN 8: 3–11.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

—LUKE 4: 18–19.

Although some of the ancient manuscripts from which our English Bible was translated omit this story of Jesus' attitude toward the social sins of society, there is much internal evidence that it could not have arisen from any source save an actual experience with the Master. It is so exquisite in its delicacy and so opposite to the spirit of human nature that it bears the marks of divinity. It is a perfect illustration of Jesus' reverence for the human spirit, and the love that always saw the crystal truth.

The woman represents the age-long attitude of the world which first exploits and then accuses; which is quick to see sin in others and equally quick in forgetting its own partnership in sin. Human beings have always been cruel to one another. To serve God and hate one's brother was and is the attitude of the non-Christian world. It was this equal love for God and one's neighbor that made Jesus' way of life unique. Note his silence and the way he does not add to the woman's shame by looking at her, but writes on the ground with his head bent down. Her accusers are so keen in their eagerness to obey the teaching of Moses! Their religious fervor is seeking for sanction in destroy-

ing the weak. Jesus' answer is perfect. If one is to cast stones at a sinner, be sure first that you too are without sin. The law of God works alike for all men and women. The accusers could not meet the test, and they went away. How many of us can rise to Jesus' level? Why is a single standard of morality for men and women necessary if personality is to be held in reverence? Our attitude toward social sin is one of the great Christian challenges of the future. Slowly the world is coming to see that the attitude of Jesus Christ is the only true one. All unlikeness to him, in thought, word, or deed, is sin; for sin is separation from God. Jesus came to build and not to destroy.

How this program differs from that of most of us Christians! We paraphrase those words of the prophet in our modern spiritual blindness, as if they read thus: "The Spirit of God is upon me, one of the privileged class, of a long line of ancestors. He gives me the exalted career of preaching good news to the best families in our town; ours is the most representative and leading Church. He sent me to release all resources for those who have every advantage and to illumine with new inspiration those who have been in the Church for years. I come to build

a magnificent building to replace the small, uncomfortable Church we have had. Our goal is to use all publicity in order to bring into our fold great numbers of desirable people so that we may retain our place as the most influential Church in the city."

What a contrast is the way of Jesus! The poor, the imprisoned captives, the blind, the bruised—they were the chief concern of the Master. To give to those who need, to help those who cannot help themselves—this is why he knows that the Spirit of God is within him. It is the heart of sacrificial love.

For Study and Discussion

1. How much of your community do you really know? What opportunities for sacrificial service are there in your town? How many streets are there on which you have never walked? In what ways could women solve some of the social problems if they followed Jesus' way of life? In what ways could the men solve them? In what ways do we need to learn the same lesson that Peter learned? *Read Acts 10:9–16.*

2. Why is it that the teaching of Jesus so

often cuts across our natural inclinations? Make a list of the spheres of your life in which you know the way of Jesus is dominant. Does it rule in our business methods and relationships? How many risks do we dare take in following Jesus' way of life? What is our sticking point? What is the inference if we are unwilling to stake our success on the truth of the Christian way? *Read 1 Samuel 26* for the graphic account of a man who staked his very life on the highest truth he knew, and won out so that he became one of the royal line back of the human side of the life of Jesus. In what respect is his spirit like unto that of the Christ?

Lord Jesus, we have followed Thee afar off. We too, like Thy disciples of old, have not been true to Thee when the severe tests of life came. Give us the love which does not desert Thee in the shadow of the cross. Make us so aware of our own shortcomings that we shall serve other tempted souls in sincere humility. Thy sacrificial blood has power to cleanse every human life from its sin. Make clean our hearts within us this day for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Comment for the Week

It is not surprising that some people are afraid to commit themselves utterly to Jesus' way of life. They fear it would involve them in a complete revolution. Every reformer draws great comfort from Jesus because of the mighty changes which always came when he was made supreme in the hearts of men. What most social reformers fail to grasp, however, is the simplicity of Jesus' method. He led in no political or social propaganda, he criticized no governmental policies, and he organized no followers for social reform. He merely inspired in people a new attitude of mind. It was unutterably simple. He bade us live spaciously Godward and manward; to accept as our birthright a limitless life, and to possess it by a limitless love. As "God so loves the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," so we too are to give ourselves to God and the world. No more revolutionary principle could be introduced, and yet it is as simple as the heart of a child.

Think of some of the results which follow such a purpose! We cannot live according to the limitless love of God without radical changes. If we do not believe this, recall, for instance,

how love for the world changed the destiny of half of humanity—viz., the womanhood of the world. They had never been included before in any blessings of other religions.

A woman in India, who came out of centuries of spiritual darkness into the full light of the good news brought by Jesus of Nazareth, visited our country to study the education of women. When asked what impressed her most in the United States, she replied at once: "The most impressive and amazing fact in America is that there are countless women who do not worship and adore the Christ. We women in India *know* that in him alone is our only hope. The beautiful sentiments of our Hindoo faith are only for men and not even for all men. To be born a woman is to be born without hope and without a God who cares. In Jesus is the *only* light which shines upon the womanhood of the world."

Most of us have come from so many centuries of Christian faith that we forget that apart from Jesus we should never have had any hope. One of the things about the Master which even his closest disciples could not understand was the way he included women and children in his teaching. When in his weariness he sat on the

rim of Jacob's well waiting for the disciples to return from the village with bread, a common woman of low ideals and life came to draw water. The marvelous message of the fourth chapter of John was revealed to her; the conception of God which the wisest philosophers had sought to define—that God is a Spirit seeking for those of us who will worship him in spirit and truth. The word of the Messiah, Christ, which the prophets of the ages had yearned to hear, came at last to an ordinary woman of no privileged class. "I that speak unto thee am he."

What a difference between Jesus and his closest, most earnest friends! He, so losing himself in the redemption of a woman that he forgot to hunger for bread; and they amazed and wondering why their Master should have anything to say to a woman. How could she have helped preaching the glad tidings with such earnestness that many of the villagers believed in the Saviour of the world through her message!

It is no wonder that some of the women who knew that Jesus was their only hope could not bear to be away from his tomb even after he was dead. While it was yet dark, Mary Magdalene, who owed him her redemption, came

with the other women to bring spices. They were the first to discover the event of the resurrection. There is an interesting contrast between the attitude of the disciples and that of the women. In the tenth verse of the twentieth chapter of John are the words: "So the disciples went away again unto their own home. But *Mary* was standing without at the tomb weeping." Then came the revelation of Jesus himself to her and the precious commission to be the first to preach to the disciples the glorious fact of the triumphant life.

All these special revelations to the hearts of women are the spiritual Magna Charta, the divine right of women to inherit the kingdom of God. The world has been slow to follow the lead of Jesus. The teaching of the survival of the fittest has been so intrenched in human thought that even to-day, after two thousand years, women are degraded and enslaved in large areas of the world. They have no equal share in the religious faith of those lands. Even the Christian Church has taken centuries to acknowledge the full spiritual heritage of women. An eminent statesman declared that no nation could rise any higher than its women. He spoke truly.

Following in the wake of this freedom which

Jesus brought, is a strange situation. Women are inheriting the political and social fruits of the Gospel without knowing Jesus Christ, who made this possible. Those who see clearly the law of love for God and our neighbor have a supreme task. To put fire into the hands of a child before the child is old enough to understand how to control and use fire, is to invite pain and a conflagration. To live a spacious life without the spacious spirit of sacrificial love is equally perilous. The world is sweeping on into light. We must work quickly to create sons and daughters of light. When men see women as temptations, instead of guardian angels of light, the world will swing back to the age of the cave man and history will repeat itself.

Jesus' way of life was unique in its appreciation of the worth of human personality. This is a natural result from a life of love; but see how great a revolution in human ways this attitude has brought about. Here again the world is swinging ahead of our Christian thinking. It will soon be impossible for a man to be considered a leading Christian if he tolerates conditions in which human beings are deprived of the opportunity to live as men born in the image of God and not as animals. Industrial condi-

tions, housing conditions, educational conditions are coming into the limelight of publicity. The world is discovering at last what Jesus did for humanity and says without hesitation: "If you are a Christian, live Jesus' way of life. That is what we want." Too long have we covered up the real truth about Christianity by selfish living; but now the truth is known by the man on the street. If we expect to walk with Jesus, we must pray as Richard Watson Gilder prayed from the heart of a great city. This is the true yearning of the Christ.

"Lead me, yea, lead me deeper into life,
This suffering, human life wherein Thou liv'st
And breathest still, and holdest thy way divine.
'Tis here, O pitying Christ, where thee I seek,
Here where the strife is fiercest; where the sun
Beats down upon the highway thronged with men,
And in the raging mart, O! deeper lead
My soul into the living world of souls
Where Thou dost move."

The world is also seeking for those who dare to face the inevitable revolution which comes when we live no longer to ourselves, but to God. It sounds simple to say as Jesus said, "Not my will, but Thine, be done," but to live it out goes contrary to the grain of human nature. We

need such a revolution to-day. Thousands of families would never be divorced if they had this attitude of spirit. Thousands of human beings would never be exploited for selfish gain if we followed the will of our Father instead of our selfish desires. As Jesus said: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you." We are seeing the truth of this to-day. One strong man exploits others. By and by the fruit from that seed comes to the harvest, and a multitude of men and women arise whose aim is to snatch back from the prosperous their own with interest. The papers call it a crime wave; Jesus sees it as the evil brood created by those of us of whom it has been said:

> "I lived for myself, I thought for myself,
> For myself and none beside,
> Just as if Jesus had never lived,
> As if he had never died."

Once Jesus said: "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." The uniqueness of Jesus' way of life lies in its stern alternatives. There is no halfway possibility. A light put under a bushel either goes out or burns up the bushel. Neutral drabness in Christian living is not pos-

sible if we wish to be *sure* that we are in the company of Jesus. It used to be possible to take half of a truth and live on contentedly. Now the world understands better what Jesus really is. The reason multitudes do not sweep into the Church is because they are still baffled by us. They can understand Jesus, but cannot understand us who say we are Christians. What a fearful thing it would be if we should wake up some day to realize that Jesus' words of warning had come true when he said, "The first shall be last, and the last first!" Perhaps our content is dangerous.

CHAPTER XI

GETTERS AND SPENDERS

THAT part of our life which is devoted to getting and spending is usually the last to come under the control of the Spirit of Jesus. The instinct of self-preservation is so strong within us that we are afraid to risk the possibility of being overcome by some adversity which we cannot surmount. It is a real adventure when we accept the fact that the "earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," and accept our rightful position as trustees who will be held accountable for what passes through our hands as income and outgo. If we accept Jesus' way of life in this, most of the problems of our life would be settled for us and we should find a buoyant freedom and joy beyond what any other way of life could ever bring.

ELEVENTH WEEK

And while he was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster cruse of ointment of spikenard very costly; and she brake the cruse, and poured it over his head.

But there were some that had indignation among themselves, saying, To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made?

For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred pence, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

But Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me.

For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good: but me ye have not always.

She hath done what she could: she hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying.

And verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

—MARK 14:3–9.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, which should betray him, saith,

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein.

—JOHN 12:4–6.

The people who are dominated by the spirit of *getting* are always critical of spending; especially when the spending is the overflow of a heart of love instead of the utilitarian spirit.

People can understand an expenditure which is merely an exchange of material values and something which feeds their pride or comfort. When a person gives ten thousand dollars for some worthy cause, it seems to be the measure of devotion; but it may be that he is buying twenty thousand dollars worth of popularity, and power and reputation for years to come. Thus giving may be merely a larger getting for oneself.

Such transactions, however, are surely better than the miser spirit which buries its gold in the ground and neither uses it for itself nor for others. To keep one's name in grateful remembrance by giving a library to a community is a higher ideal because of what it makes possible for all people. We need hosts of people who may be remembered by a grateful public this way. We cannot carry away our resources with us, and the best we can do is to return them for the common good.

In this incident in Jesus' life, the spirit which spends rises to its highest level. It is the spontaneous spirit of a little child which gives itself without limit because it knows that it can never repay the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. In the heart of the woman in Bethany that day were the teachings of Jesus about his coming

death in Jerusalem, and she must show her love somehow by giving the most precious gift she had. In the shadow of the coming cross she, more than all the disciples, knew the spirit of those words:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Even the disciples most intimate with Jesus could not reach such a height of giving. They looked not at the object of the gift, but at its money value of three hundred shillings. They did not dare say, "If she had given this to us, we could have lived on it for many weeks," but their thought turned to other poor people who might have had it. John gives the real motive in the heart of Judas which inspired the indignation against the woman. Jesus understood. He knew that the giving of the woman was the first outpouring of broken-hearted love which his death on the cross would call out from other understanding hearts throughout the world. "He died for all," said Paul, "that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him *who for their sakes* died, and rose again." (2 Cor. 5:15.)

Thank God, there are some Christians who adventure all they have because of their crucified Lord. It is the way to live. It goes against popular counsel; it is not the easy road. Death to self is never easy. It is only possible when one so loves that he cannot help spending himself for love's sake.

For Study and Discussion

Read 1 Peter 5: 2–4; Acts 8: 18–24; Acts 5: 1–11.

Peter had bitter experience with people who wanted spiritual power for commercial purposes. It is not surprising that he speaks of money as "filthy lucre." Prosperity and riches were ancient Hebrew ambitions, and it was difficult for people to make the new emphasis of spiritual power apart from earthly resources. How can money be redeemed from taint? How is it tainted? By the motive of the possessor, by the source of its possession, by the use of it, or by the lure of it? Where is the danger point in the life of a Christian, in the act of Ananias, in the ambition of Simon?

Read 1 Kings 21: 1–16.

What is the end of covetousness? How many Naboths are there in your community who have

been exploited by "leading citizens"? How does this account for the spiritual apathy of many so-called Christians? How does this spirit affect the question of international peace?

Read Mark 12:38–44.

How is the art of spending related to the life of the spirit? Does it involve the renunciation of selfishness? How would our annual budget of expenditure differ if we followed Jesus' way of life? Who are some of the people who resemble the woman of Bethany? What are the rewards of their outpoured devotion? What kinds of service for Christ can only be done with such giving?

Heavenly Father, may we give ourselves to the service of Jesus Christ without reservations. May every one of our possessions bear the seal of his ownership. May we not be ashamed in the day when we stand before Thee to give an account of our deeds done in the body. Thou hast taught us that unless we have the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his. May we give him right of way in every detail of our life day by day.. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

One of the chief concerns of most men and women is that they may find resources by which they may live. To increase our salaries, make our business more profitable, and raise large sums of money for various purposes, that is our major interest in life. One would think that the chief game in life is heaping up a pile of money so that we should be relieved of all strain and responsibility in future days. Very few realize that at the moment one has the control of any resource of power, such as money, or any other possessions, that is the time when, in the teaching of Jesus Christ, our real responsibility begins. It is the spending of what we get that is the chief business of our daily life.

It is often said that men earn most of the money in the world, but women spend most of it; that men are the greatest producers and women are the greatest consumers. Nowadays, however, the burden is being more equalized by the millions of women in the business and professional world. Some of us say that, in our case, our chief trouble is that we have no money to spend for what we should like to do. Perhaps if we think further, and understand what it is to be a consumer, we may find a new law of life which will help us to realize our desires.

The task of being a consumer is an intricate one—enough to tax the wisdom of the best of us. At the outset we face a searching spiritual principle of we are to meet the approval of Jesus Christ. This is the real question: Do we look upon ourselves as a means to supplying what we *want* or what we *need?* There is much that we need: food, shelter, clothing, education, recreation—all these are needful for our life on earth. Jesus said: "Be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . . Your heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things." This is indeed our Father's will, and yet to-day there are millions of people in the world who do not begin to have what they need. Why is this? The reasons are not remote. Some of the world's need comes because people are not willing to work together with God for the daily bread. Wheat represents united work on the part of God and man. We are meant to be co-creators with God. A larger reason why the heavenly purpose to supply our need is not realized is because of the selfishness of men's hearts who hoard the fruits of the earth for their selfish greed. Their principle of living is to get what they *want!*

What we *want*—that is as insatiable as ambition; it is the desire of the eye, the desire of the flesh, and the pride of life of which we are warned lest we love that and miss spiritual treasures. To be content with daily needs instead of daily cravings, that is the first step in company with Jesus. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

Most of us may agree up to this point, because we are confident that these facts are not true of us. This may be, but there is something greater in which we are concerned. It is the spiritual responsibility we have as spenders. It involves the use of things. Everything has a purpose and our task is to find that purpose and fulfill it. If we allow a child to dig a ditch with an umbrella, we defeat the purpose of the umbrella and defraud some poor soul of shelter on a rainy day. To use, and not misuse, is the Christian task of stewardship. If Jesus came to-day, he would condemn us not only for burying gold, but for countless other things of some value hidden away in attics and chests or destroyed through misuse, so that they are not of service in the world. The large sums of money produced through rummage sales prove how

through the years we were poor stewards of what was intrusted to us. In the home, women are largely responsible for this; but men express themselves in similar ways in the business world. Oftentimes large sums of money raised through the sacrificial effort of many givers is wasted in the spending The history of politics and public service, and even some church-building and religious organization, is an eloquent testimony to the way in which we forget the day of reckoning which must surely come when God shall hold us accountable as guardians of resources. In the biography of a man, renowned for his spiritual power, the secret of his radiant life is recorded. He attributed it to the fact that on a certain day each year he went over all his possessions and shared with others everything he did not need for his work. He said that a flood-tide of power always came to him as a result of his sacrificial act and he was released from bondage to things.

In following Jesus' way of life we also face the responsiblity for the care of things. How much we could save by extracting full service from them. No lesson is more needed by children to-day than to have true appreciation, and to appraise the real value of what they have.

Most children have more than they can appreciate. How can they have true perspective about spiritual values if they are not trained in material values?

We would be helped in this if we translated values into work. A toy becomes valuable when we realize that woodmen, carpenters, painters, iron makers, transporters, and retailers put hours of work into making it possible. If we ask ourselves, How many people did it take to feed me my breakfast, we would be appalled by the multitude who gave their toil to growing flax, weaving linen, cultivating gardens, live stock; the silversmiths, glassmakers, woodcutters, well diggers, furniture makers, sugar-cane workers, and hosts of others. No one of us can call himself self-made or independent. We are knit together with the whole world in the supply of our daily needs. Have we all a true sense of values—the lives that have toiled that we might use? It ought to make of everything we have a sacrament, a holy thing.

Have we ever defined the word *luxury?* It is something we have, but do not use. Some of us can use more than others, and we have a potential right to all we can use. But to be a miser; to hoard money, houses, lands, posses-

sions, and not to use them—that may well make us wonder whether, if Jesus came to-day, he would recognize us as friends.

The teaching of the Gospel is clear about stewardship for service. It was demonstrated often by the Master. One day he was surrounded by five thousand who needed food; and merely with the help of a small boy, he met the situation. In this one incident there are eternal principles by which we might have unusual experiences if we used them. In fact, it would not be difficult to fulfill all the Christian service for which we are responsible, if we governed our Christian living according to these principles of Jesus.

The first principle concerns the full use of *all* that we have. The boy in the story had only five little bread cakes and two fishes. The disciples of Jesus in their worldly wisdom said, "What is the use? this small lunch is not adequate for the multitude." And yet under the spell of the power of God there was enough and to spare. The same miracle happened one day last year. A group of one hundred women were wondering how they could secure two hundred dollars to complete some service for Christ. They talked for an hour and shook their heads

sadly over the fact that they could do nothing. Suddenly the little daughter of one of them slipped away and ran to the leader with eagerness. "Here's *all* my money! That will help some," and she held out a precious nickel. Then something happened. The Spirit of God worked in the hearts of those present. In ten minutes, more than the required sum had been offered. It was indeed a miracle, the work of God. How often we say, "I would like to help, but"—and nothing happens. If we would only change it to "I want to help, and here is everything I have," anything could happen. I haven't money, but I have flowers in my garden for sale, I have a house to shelter a foreign student, I have influence which can be used, etc. Jesus Christ draws near to the heart which offers for his use such as it has.

We discover also another spiritual principle for spacious living. When our love holds nothing back, our Lord gives it again to us to use, hallowed by his blessing. He works through us for the service of the world. The miracle was wrought not by Jesus alone, but by Jesus and his friends working together. Vain is it to pray, "Lord, bless the people who need Thee," while we detach ourselves from them. Prayers

of love are merely outreachings of arms of love. Without the arm, the love cannot be felt. It is dangerous to have desire to help without carrying it out; sooner or later we lose our power to desire.

Another principle is as sure as the law of gravitation. The small lunch with which we start to feed others feeds five thousand, and also meets our own need abundantly. Twelve baskets full for themselves after all had been done! "There is that which giveth, and yet increaseth," said the prophet ages ago. People know from experience that this is a true law of life.

"Yield thy poor best,
And nurse not how nor why,
Lest some day, seeing all about thee spread
A mighty crowd, and marvelously fed,
Thy heart breaks forth in a bitter cry:
I might have furnished—I, yea, even I—
The two small fishes and the barley bread."

CHAPTER XII

THE COST OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

SPIRITUAL adventuring is a costly process so far as our earthly desires are concerned. When Peary went on his quest to discover the North Pole, it cost him all the usual indulgence in easy-living, but it enrolled him as a world-renowned name to be remembered by all future generations. The rewards far outweigh the renunciation of the flesh. Few of us even suspect the greatness which lies within our reach, but is ever denied us because we will not pay the price of self-discipline. We little know what we miss. We are like travelers who are too weary to climb the trail to Inspiration Point, or too fond of sloth to waken for the beauty of the sunrise and the songs of birds. God is calling for men and women who are alive and, undaunted by the downward earthly pull, are bound for the heights.

TWELFTH WEEK

Now there went with him great multitudes: and he turned, and said unto them,

If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it?

Lest haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold begin to mock him,

Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

Or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and asketh conditions of peace.

So therefore, whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Salt therefore is good: but even if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

It is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill: men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. —LUKE 14: 25–35.

This is not our favorite section of the Gospel. The words of Jesus are so exacting that they

startle us out of our spiritual complacency. There are four conditions of discipleship which the Master lays down, and at the end gives the solemn warning, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Because there is a possibility that we may be like the multitude which hears sounds, but cannot understand them, we need to open our hearts especially to the teaching of the Holy Spirit that we may sense the inner meaning of this challenge to our discipleship.

The first condition of real friendship with Jesus Christ is that we shall realize that there is a cross to be borne. Great crowds were following Jesus because they partly believed that he was indeed the Messiah, and they wanted to be around him when the blessings were being distributed. He challenged every bit of heroic spirit in them by saying that unless they were willing to chose his will in preference to the persuasions of father, mother, wife, children, or sisters, they *cannot* call themselves disciples.

How many children have been kept from realizing God's highest purpose for them in some chosen career, because the mistaken love of parents kept them from their call to a spiritual adventure. They are like Abraham, who was kept from obeying God's call by his father-in-

law, Terah. God freed him only by removing Terah from this world. It is a fearful thing to try to thwart God's plan for another life. There is only one way of life open—to take up this cross and follow Jesus.

The second test of discipleship concerns the counting of the cost beforehand. Jesus wants followers who have looked all the issues squarely in the face and then have chosen deliberately to cast in their lot with him. It is no mere acquiescence in his teaching or enthusiastic impulse that he wants; he stakes his appeal to men on the careful weighing of all evidence before they start on the way of life. During that day people were building extravagantly and stirring up wars and often failing of victory. Jesus wants people who reckon with difficulties and know that the Christian adventure is full of risk and uncertainties. He never promised anything but this: "In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33.)

The third condition is even more difficult, because it involves renouncing all possessions for the sake of Jesus. This does not mean that it is wrong to have possessions; but that when the choice comes between selfishness and the Sav-

iour, we are to have the continual attitude of renouncing selfishness. *All* that we have is to be held in trust for his cause, for him to use. It must minister to richer and fuller spiritual life or we lag behind in discipleship. How many of us there are who bury our souls under the heap of possessions through indulgence and the mistaken idea that we may be Christ's, but possessions are ours.

This leads us to the fourth test of discipleship: the spirit of sacrifice. Jesus is so emphatic in all this that he likens the sacrificial spirit to the savor of the salt. If salt has no savor, it is useless; it cannot even be used as a fertilizer for the land. So is a disciple who has lost the sacrificial spirit for Jesus' sake; he cannot be a disciple. We need to go apart with our Lord and count the cost of following him, and then make our decision.

For Study and Discussion

Read Matthew 15:3–9.

This helps us to understand the meaning of the words "*hating* father and mother." Here Jesus shows the hypocrisy of pretending to give to God what should have been given to parents.

Filial honor is one of God's commands. The word "hating" has no moral quality here, but means obedience to the call of God, even if it contradicts the desires of those nearest and dearest. In what ways have you found this same test in your life? What have been the results in the experience of some you have known who followed the counsels of friends instead of their conscience? What is the true value of human counsel? What is its danger?

Read John 7: 1–12.

How did Jesus have to meet this necessity for renunciation in his own life? Note the significance of verse 5 and John 1: 11. Read also Matthew 10: 24, 25. What are the inferences for our life in the light of these passages? Why then do we expect the Christian life to be an easy one? What is the difference between the peace of a captain whose ship is tied up at the dock, and his peace when the ship is in mid-ocean? Does everything worthwhile have its price? What is the test of the price?

Lord Jesus, Thou dost ask us to go only where Thou hast already gone. We want to follow in Thy steps. Thou knowest the shrinking of our flesh when it faces sacrificial living. Give us the enabling power to take up our cross now and follow Thee. We dare not face the future apart from Thee, therefore do Thou make Thy strength perfect in our weakness. Amen.

Comment for the Week

One day when Jesus was talking with his disciples about his going away, one of them, of course it was Peter, burst forth with a question: "Why cannot I follow thee even now? I will lay down my life for thee."

Surely no one of us longs to meet the tests of friendship with the Master more than Peter must have longed to that day, and yet he failed pitifully. We, too, are asking the same question. Perhaps if we know the secrets of Peter's disappointing experience, we shall meet the tests more easily.

The first failure to stand the test of friendship with Jesus comes from our self-confidence, as it did in Peter's case. Jesus said to him:

"Will you lay down your life for me? I must tell you truly: the cock shall not crow before thou shalt deny me thrice." Even now we are so sure of our desires. We resolve with all our strength to be true to him. Then we, too, fail through fear of those who are opposing the Master, or through the challenge of some one who thinks we are early-Victorian or prudish to be so devoted to his cause. We are silent and go with the multitude while in the depth of our hearts we miss the divine presence. We think we are so true to him that we need not be on our guard, and before we realize it we have betrayed our best friend.

Peter also failed to meet the test of friendship because he was not willing to face the sacrificial element in his love, to suffer for love's sake. He called out to Jesus when he heard his words about the cross, "Spare thyself." In reply Jesus called him Satan instead of friend, and challenged his followers with these words: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." How many of us fail at this point. We want love as a thrill of emotion, but flee from it when it breaks our heart. The deeper we love, the deeper our possible suffering. Do we truly love

the Master enough to feel the hurt of his sorrow for our sins and the indifference of the world to his life and death? It is possible to be so casual about his program that a slow hardening of our hearts will keep us from eternal life. Perhaps even now we are resenting some sorrow which has come to us and wondering how God can be a God of love and let us suffer. That is one of the mysteries of life. The lily cannot grow from the bulb apart from the sacrificial giving of the bulb. It is a law of life. The important point to guard is that we shall not miss the reward of pain, which is deeper and richer life. Adelaide Procter discerned this truth in her words—

> "I thank Thee, Lord, that all our joy
> Is touched with pain.
> That shadows fall on brightest hours,
> That thorns remain,
> So that earth's bliss may be our guide
> And not our chain."

It must have cost those friends of Jesus Christ much to do what Jesus asked them in his last words with them. He told them not to depart from the city of Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. That was a hard

word for them to obey. Jerusalem was full of enemies of Jesus; it was there that they crucified him; it was there that his friends had to secrete themselves in an upper room behind locked doors, lest they too would be discovered and haled to death as their Master had been. Moreover, it was not their home; their fishing business would be long neglected in Galilee. They could not even make plans for the future; they were only to wait. What a test of friendship! But they were obedient; they went back to the hostile city, wondering.

Can you imagine the picture of those one hundred and twenty people, men and women praying and waiting for God to illumine their darkness? Could we do that nowadays amid such danger and uncertainty? They little knew the priceless reality within their reach; the realization of the connecting current of life between their hearts and the heart of God; the realizing sense of the Holy Spirit. They had to be fearfully in earnest to wait ten days in prayer. We could scarcely endure an hour, much less a day. We hurriedly repeat to God all our desires and then go our way, hoping that he will work miracles for us. Who can estimate what we miss by our haste! Experiences as

far-reaching as that day of Pentecost are possible even for us; if we dared reach out in faith in the very place of our fears, and *wait* for God.

Prayer as communion in which we see our hearts revealed by the searching thoughts of the Master and reach up to meet his standards and guidance for our wisdom, such an experience takes genuine devotion to the cause of an understanding friendship with Christ.

We say that we have no time, that the expectations of our friends must not be disappointed. There are so many pressing demands on us these days that we do not attempt to meet them all; we meet those that we really care most to meet. The words of Jesus are very explicit. "Ye shall receive power, *when* the Holy Spirit is come upon you." "Wait for the promise of the Father," said he. There is no other way to meet the test of intimate friendship. We must live with our friend continuously, intensely, for long seasons, until we become one in desire, in purpose of power.

What does the cause of Christ need most today? We think it is money, or workers, or buildings, or multitudes of followers. None of these are needed so much as a few who will dare

once more to wait in prayer for the power from on high. It is not a gift for the mighty or the high officials only; it is for those of humble heart who dare to take Jesus at his word. Are we willing now to make this of first importance? There is no limit to what may come if we fulfill the condition. Peter became transformed from a coward into the boldest of all followers of Jesus. Thousands came to know Jesus Christ those few days in Jerusalem because he had waited for the promise of the Father.

One thing we all can do. We can resolve to be genuine, and not talk about prayer when we do not practice it. We can face the facts about our spiritual life and own up to ourselves our real experience. Perhaps in this way we may startle ourselves into an eager desire to know the heart of God now. He waits for us. It is not that we need more of him, but that he needs more of us. Can we not say now,

> "I give Thee back the life I owe,
> That in Thine ocean's depths its flow
> May richer, fuller be."

How many of us have ever discovered the reason why there are comparatively so few great spiritual leaders? Have we ever discovered the

relation between adventure and leadership? Most of us spend our life trying to make the world safe. Parents keep nurses in constant attendance on their children for the purpose of eliminating all chance for an adventure. We want them to escape everything that might involve risk or danger. Thus we carefully deplete their powers of resistance, and kill the spirit of heroism and adventure. Then we wonder why the Christ who risked all for our sakes does not enthrall their hearts. We love all the warm summer virtues of the Christian life, such as love, joy, and peace, but we turn from the storm and the far-distant cry of the lamb that has strayed away. Our fireside is too comfortable and safe for us to go out in the storm and night, as Jesus pictured life, to find that foolish little lamb. Then we sigh and wonder why God does not raise up great leaders for his cause. Meanwhile his heart breaks because we are not willing to take up our cross and pay the cost and rise to power through death to ourselves. Does your religion supply you with any practical outlet for spiritual adventure?

There is another test in following the way of Jesus which few of us understand. Just as the command came to the disciples to wait in

Jerusalem, and begin their work there, so the law of the spiritual life of freedom demands that we shall begin at that spot in our experience where fear has to be replaced by faith. It is always so. Of what are you fearful? About what do you feel the need of caution? That is the very place where your spiritual adventure, if you are to have any, and follow Jesus, must begin. At that spot your cross stands, and it must be taken up in the power of prayer and a relaxing of the will, the desire, and the spirit. It is the same with swimming. As long as we have fear of the water, we cannot swim. It is when we accept the water and relax utterly that we find ourselves floating, and held up by that which we feared. Even now waters of sorrow, of disappointment, of fears, and anxieties overwhelm us. They may become waters of power to give us power. We too may walk on them as Jesus did, and Peter. "All things are possible to him that believeth."

If we do not pay our price in following Jesus, what will happen? Jesus and his cause will sweep ahead without us and we shall be left lonely, forsaken, having lived in vain so far as God's will is concerned. It seems incredible that Jesus could have had so much faith in such

trembling, hesitant, unbelieving souls as most of us are:

"I thought His love would weaken
As more and more He knew me.
But it burneth like a beacon,
And its light and heat go through me,
And I ever hear Him say
As he goes along his way,
'Foolish souls, O do come near Me,
My sheep should never fear Me;
I am the Shepherd true; I am the Shepherd true!'"

THE END

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